

Island County Comprehensive Plan

2025 Periodic Update



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GLOSSARY



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GLOSSARY

“Accessory dwelling unit, attached” means separate living quarters contained within, sharing a wall with, or connected by a covered breezeway no longer than 20 feet in length to, the primary residence which include provisions for sleeping, cooking (including an oven, range, or stovetop), and sanitation. An attached ADU is subject to the requirements and conditions provided in ICC 17.03.180.

“Accessory dwelling unit, detached” means a dwelling unit, situated on the same parcel as a single family dwelling and that shares a common access point with the single family dwelling. Detached ADUs do not include recreational vehicles, travel trailers, park model homes, or tiny homes on wheels. A detached ADU is subject to the requirements and conditions provided in ICC [17.03.180](#).

“Act” means the Growth Management Act.

“Adequate public facilities” means facilities that have the capacity to serve development without decreasing levels of service below locally established minimums.

“Affordable housing” means housing that is reserved for a household that earns up to 80 percent of the area median income, adjusted for household size; to be considered “affordable,” the monthly housing costs, including utilities other than telephone, must not exceed thirty percent of the household’s income. See: Extremely Low-Income Housing, Very Low-Income Housing, Low-Income Housing and Moderate-Income Housing.

“Agriculture” means the business of growing or producing any agricultural or horticultural produce or crop, including but not limited to berries, grain, hay, straw, turf, seed, Christmas trees (not subject to state excise tax on timber harvest) and the raising of any animal, bird, or insect, or the milk, eggs, wool, fur, meat, honey, or other substances obtained therefrom.” **“Agricultural land”** means land primarily devoted to the commercial production of horticultural, viticultural, floricultural, dairy, apiary, vegetable, or animal products or of berries, grain, hay, straw, turf, seed, Christmas trees (not subject to the state excise tax on timber harvest), or livestock and that has long-term commercial significance for agricultural production.

“Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)” means the act that ensures access for the disabled for publicly used facilities, employment, public transportation and public communication.

“Anti-displacement” means policies meant to prevent or reduce displacement of the historical or current residents. See also Displacement.

“Aquifer” means any geologic formation that will yield water to a well or other withdrawal works in sufficient quantity for beneficial use.

“Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas” are areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water, including areas where an aquifer that is a source of drinking water is vulnerable to contamination that would affect the potability of the water, or is susceptible to reduced recharge.

“Area median income” means annual household income for Island County as published on an annual basis by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

“Arterial roadways” means a class of roadway serving major movements of traffic not served by freeways. Arterial roadways are functionally classed depending on the degree to which they serve through traffic movements versus access to land.

“Available public facilities” means that facilities or services are in place or that a financial commitment is in place to provide the facilities or services within a specified time. In the case of transportation facilities and services, the specified time is six years from the time of development.

“Best available science” means scientific information such as research, inventory, monitoring, surveys, modeling, synthesis, expert opinion, or assessment that is used to designate, protect, or restore critical areas. As defined by WAC 365-195-900 through 365-195-925, best available science is derived from a process that includes peer-reviewed literature, standard methods, logical conclusions, and reasonable inferences, quantitative analysis, and documented references to produce reliable information.

“Best management practices (BMP)” means physical, structural, and/or managerial practices designed to prevent or reduce pollution of water.

“Board of Island County Commissioners (Board)” means the elected representative governing body of Island County, providing both legislative and executive functions.

“Buffer” means a separation designed to absorb potential conflicts between differing land uses, or to protect critical areas or significant natural features. Generally, buffers shall be left in a natural state, or, if necessary, may be supplemented by landscaping and are used so that structures, uses, and roads, when site conditions permit, are screened from adjacent properties or public or private roads external to the lot or parcel. **“Business park”** means a development providing for a mix of light industrial distribution and related commercial retail, office, and service uses.

“Capacity” means the maximum number of vehicles that can pass over a given section of a lane or roadway in one direction (or in both direction for a two- or three-lane facility) during a given time period under prevailing roadway and traffic conditions. It is the maximum rate of flow that has a reasonable expectation of occurring.

“Capital cost” means costs of building, improving, or acquiring long term assets or infrastructure such as purchase of land, construction of roadways and sewage treatment facilities, and acquisition of buildings. Distinguished from operating costs.

“Capital facilities” means public structures, improvements, pieces of equipment or other major assets, including land, that have a useful life of at least 10 years and cost over \$25,000. Capital facilities are provided by and for public purposes and services. For the purposes of the Capital Facilities Element, capital facilities include surface water management, solid waste disposal, law and justice, general government, parks and recreation facilities, airport, transportation, education, fire protection, sanitary sewer, and public water supply systems.

“Capital improvement program (CIP)” means a plan that matches the costs of capital improvements to anticipated revenue and a timeline. CIPs are usually prepared for six or more years, updated annually, and coordinated with the comprehensive planning process.

“Capital improvement” means land, improvements to land, structures (including design, permitting, and construction), initial furnishings and selected equipment. Other capital costs, such as motor vehicles and motorized equipment, computers and office equipment, office furnishings, and small tools are considered to be minor capital expenses in the County’s annual budget, are not generally considered capital improvements for the purposes of this Comprehensive Plan, or the issuance of development permits. For the purposes of the Capital Facilities Element and Plan, a Capital Improvement includes any costs over \$25,000.

“Category of capital facilities” means a specific group of capital facilities, as follows:

A. Category A capital facilities are facilities owned or operated by Island County and subject to the requirement for concurrency as follows:

- Arterials;
- Transit routes;
- Intersections of transit routes/arterials and other county roads.

(Category A facilities do not include the intersection of county arterials, county transit routes and state facilities nor county transit routes on state facilities. Public road intersections with SR 20 and SR 525 are included in the Washington State Transportation Plan’s Travel Delay Methodology which is the basis of defining levels of service on highways of statewide significance.)

B. Category B capital facilities are facilities owned or operated by federal, state, or city governments, independent districts, or individuals/private/community organizations and which are subject to the requirement for concurrency.

C. Category C capital facilities are facilities owned or operated by Island County but not subject to the requirement for concurrency.

D. Category D capital facilities are facilities owned or operated by federal, state, or city governments, independent districts, or private organizations but not subject to the requirement for concurrency.

“City” means any city or town within Island County.

“Climate friendly food” means produced in resilient food systems with either benefits, or no negative impacts, on the local environment.

“Climate resilience” means the ongoing process of anticipating, preparing for, and adapting to changes in climate and minimizing negative impacts to our natural systems, infrastructure, and communities. For natural systems, increasing climate resilience involves restoring and increasing the health, function, and integrity of our ecosystems and improving their ability to absorb and recover from climate-affected disturbances. For communities, increasing climate resilience means enhancing their ability to understand, prevent, adapt, and recover from climate impacts to people and infrastructure.

“Climate-smart forestry” means a dynamic and adaptable approach to sustainable forest management that optimizes climate adaptation and mitigation outcomes. Climate-smart forestry is guided by science and can be adapted to different regions and changes conditions. It recognizes the vital role of different forest types, including private working forests, in achieving climate solutions.

“Co-living housing” means a residential development with sleeping units that are independently rented and lockable and provide living and sleeping space, and residents share kitchen facilities with other sleeping units in the building.

“Compatible” means capable of existing together without discord or in a state of mutual tolerance.

“Concurrency” means that adequate capital facilities are available when the impacts of development occur, except that in the case of transit routes and county/city/town arterial roads and their intersections, and highways of statewide significance. This definition includes the two concepts of “adequate public facilities” and of “available public facilities” as defined above. Concurrent with development shall mean:

- A. That the capacity of an affected transit route/arterial or arterial intersection(s), and/or highways of statewide significance, is sufficient to accommodate the projected transportation impacts of a proposed development; or
- B. That improvements, strategies, or other mitigation measures which will achieve or maintain an operating level at or above the level of service standard established for the affected transit route/arterial or arterial intersection(s), and/or highways of statewide significance:
 - 1. Are in place, planned, reasonably funded, and scheduled for completion no later six (6) years after development approval as reflected in the most recent version of the adopted county or state Transportation Improvement Program (TIP); or
 - 2. Will be available and complete no later than six (6) years after development approval, as provided where appropriate by the applicant’s voluntary financial commitment/agreement (that is in place at the time of the development’s approval).

“Condominium” means real property, portions of which are designated for separate ownership and the remainder of which is designated for common ownership solely by the owners of those portions. Real property is not a condominium unless the undivided interest in the common elements is vested in the unit owners, and unless a declaration and a survey map and plans have been recorded. Condominiums must meet all provisions of Chapter 64.34 RCW.

“Contiguous development” means development of areas immediately adjacent to one another.

“Coordination” means consultation and cooperation among jurisdictions.

“Correction” means a project(s) or strategy(ies) to correct existing or projected Level of Service (LOS) deficiencies.

“Cottage housing” means a development of smaller detached homes that share common areas.

“County-owned parks” means parks owned and operated by the County as defined by the Parks and Recreation Element.

“Countywide planning policies” means the countywide growth management policy plan required by the state Growth Management Act that promotes regional cooperation and specifies the roles and responsibilities of cities and the county. (RCW 36.70A.210).

“Courtyard apartment” means attached dwelling units arranged on two or three sides of a yard or court.

“Covenants” means private restrictions placed on land regulating land use activities.

“Critical areas” means areas of environmental sensitivity, which include the following areas and ecosystems (a) wetlands; (b) areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water; (c) fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas; (d) frequently flooded areas; and (e) geologically hazardous areas.

“Critical infrastructure” means assets, systems, and networks that are essential to everyday living, including but not limited to, water, wastewater, food, transportation, communications, emergency services, healthcare, and power.

“Current use open space taxation” means tax reduction programs for properties utilized for agriculture, timber and open space uses as provided in RCW 84.34. Island County’s Public Benefit Rating System is utilized for open space tax reduction.

“Development activity” means any proposal that will result in construction, development, earth movement, clearing, or other site disturbance which generates new traffic demands following completion of the proposal and which requires a permit, approval, or authorization from the county, except that single family residential building permits, proposals governed by Chapter 58.17 RCW as explained in the footnoted court cases (ICC 11.04.020) or any proposed activity by a public or private utility or service, are not considered a development activity for the purposes of concurrency.

“Displacement” means when a household is forced or pressured to move from their home or neighborhood by factors outside of their control. Displacement can be physical, economic, or cultural.

- Physical displacement typically occurs with an eviction or lease termination, or the expiration of covenants on rent- or income-restricted housing.
- Economic displacement occurs when pressures of increased housing costs compel a household to relocate.
- Cultural displacement occurs when people choose to move because their neighbors and culturally related businesses and institutions have left the area.

“Duplex” means a dwelling unit designed exclusively for occupancy by two (2) families living independently of each other, doing their own cooking, and containing two (2) dwelling units. Such dwelling units have a common roof, or the dwelling units are joined by a common roof. A single family dwelling unit with an attached ADU is not considered a duplex.

“Dwelling unit” means any building, or portion thereof that includes provisions for sleeping, cooking, and sanitation, as required by Island County code. Dwelling units include site-built homes, mobile/manufactured homes, modular homes, tiny homes, or one unit in a duplex, triplex, fourplex or multifamily apartment.

“Emergency housing” means temporary indoor accommodations for individuals or families who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless that is intended to address the basic health, food, clothing, and personal hygiene needs of individuals or families. Emergency housing may or may not require occupants to enter into a lease or an occupancy agreement.

“Emergency shelter” means a facility that provides a temporary shelter for individuals or families who are currently homeless. Emergency shelter may not require occupants to enter into a lease or an occupancy agreement. Emergency shelter facilities may include day and warming centers that do not provide overnight accommodations. Emergency shelters may include overnight shelters which provide safe and dry conditions that save lives.

“Environmental harm” means the individual or cumulative environmental health impacts and risks to communities caused by historic, current, or projected:

- Exposure to pollution, conventional or toxic pollutants, environmental hazards, or other contamination in the air, water, and land;
- Adverse environmental effects, including exposure to contamination, hazardous substances, or pollution that increase the risk of adverse environmental health outcomes or create vulnerabilities to the impacts of climate change;
- Loss or impairment of ecosystem functions or traditional food resources or loss of access to gather cultural resources or harvest traditional foods; or
- Health and economic impacts from climate change.

“Environmental justice” means the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

“Essential public facilities” means those facilities that provide a service to the public and are required to support basic social needs in the community, region and state and to implement the comprehensive plan but are typically difficult to site because they may require an extremely large amount of acreage, and additionally may have aesthetic issues that may not meet standards for rural character; and may create exceptionally high impacts from the amounts and type of transportation, excessive noise, odor, lighting and glare, and may involve unusually high security measures. Essential public facilities include, but are not limited to, airports, military installations, state educational facilities, state or regional transportation facilities, state and local correctional facilities, solid waste-handling facilities, and large in-patient facilities including substance-abuse facilities, mental health facilities, group homes, septage collection and treatment, public school facilities, and sewage treatment facilities. Throughput transmission facilities, major utilities, and communication towers are not essential public facilities. Essential public facilities fall into the two (2) following classifications:

- a) *Class A facilities.* These facilities serve a large region or the state and generally must locate in the rural area because they require extremely large sites and must be located away from centers of population due to their associated impacts and required security measures. They will likely have major impacts on the site and surrounding area due to changes to the natural landscape and vegetation at the time of site development and from the associated size of the use, and levels of traffic, noise, odors, lighting, and other factors during operation. These facilities include, but are not limited to regional transportation facilities, such as regional airports, state correction facilities, and state educational facilities.

b) *Class B facilities*. These facilities serve the county, a small region, or a neighborhood and generally need to be located near the populations they serve. These facilities include but are not limited to solid waste-handling facilities, septage collection and treatment, public school facilities, sewage treatment facilities, group homes, including assisted living facilities, and large inpatient facilities (e.g., substance abuse facilities, and mental health facilities).

“Extremely low-income housing” means housing that is affordable to a household that earns less than 30 percent of the area median income, adjusted for household size. (see also “Low-income Housing” and “Very Low-income Housing”).

“Facilities” means the physical structure or structures in which a service is provided.

“Farm-worker housing” means permanent housing for seasonal and year around farm workers and their families.

“Fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas (FWHCA)” means areas that serve a critical role in sustaining needed habitats and species for the functional integrity of the ecosystem, and which, if altered, may reduce the likelihood that the species will persist over the long term. These areas may include, but are not limited to, rare or vulnerable ecological systems, communities, and habitat or habitat elements including seasonal ranges, breeding habitat, winter range, and movement corridors; and areas with high relative population density or species richness. In Island County, FWHCA also include locally important and designated habitats and species (WAC 365-190-030(6)).

“Fourplex” means a dwelling unit, or portion thereof, designed for occupancy by four (4) families living independently of each other, doing their own cooking and containing four (4) dwelling units. Such dwelling units have a common roof or the dwelling units are joined by a common roof.

“Frequently flooded areas” means all areas of special flood hazard as mapped within the County, and other areas that could be threatened by flooding or areas subject to flooding due to high groundwater. Frequently flooded areas perform important hydrologic functions and may present a risk to persons and property. These areas include, but are not limited to, streams, rivers, lakes, coastal areas, wetlands, and areas where high groundwater forms ponds on the ground surface. Classifications of frequently flooded areas include, at a minimum, the 100-year floodplain designations of the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the National Flood Insurance Program. Frequently flooded areas under shoreline jurisdiction are subject to the provisions of Chapter 90.58 RCW (Shoreline Management Act) and Chapter 17.05A ICC.

“Geologically hazardous area” means areas that because of their susceptibility to erosion, sliding, or other geologic events, are generally not suited to the siting of commercial, residential, or industrial development consistent with public health or safety concerns. Areas susceptible to one (1) or more of the following types of hazards shall be classified as a geologically hazardous area: erosion hazard; landslide hazard; and seismic hazard.

“Goal” means a statement in the Comprehensive Plan that acts as a direction setter. It is an ideal future end, condition, or state related to the public health, safety, or general welfare toward which planning and implementation measures are directed. A goal is a general expression of community values and, therefore, is abstract in nature. Consequently, a goal is generally not quantifiable, time-dependent, or suggestive of specific actions for its achievement.

“Green infrastructure” means a wide array of natural assets and built structures, including parks, stormwater management facilities at multiple scales that manage wet weather and that maintain and restore natural hydrology through storage, infiltration, evapotranspiration, and harvesting and using stormwater.

“Habitat” means the physical location or type of environment in which an organism or biological population lives or occurs.

“Highly impacted community” means a community designated by the department of health based on cumulative impact analyses in RCW 19.405.140 or a community located in census tracts that are fully or partially on tribal lands.

“Incorporated” means any lands that are within the jurisdictional boundaries of a city.

“IRTPO (Island Regional Transportation Planning Organization)” means the organization that carries out joint transportation planning efforts by Island County, cities, ports, Island Transit, major employers, and the Washington State Department of Transportation (DOT).

“Limited area of more intensive development (LAMIRD)” means an area of existing density in the Rural Lands with a logical outer boundary, established by ordinance with Island County’s first Growth Management Act Comprehensive Plan update.

“Level of service (LOS) standard” means an established minimum capacity of capital facilities that must be provided per unit of demand or other appropriate measure of need. See the Capital Facilities and Utilities Element for more details on LOS Standards.

“Lot, parent” means a lot which is subdivided into unit lots through the unit lot subdivision process. See also lot, unit and unit lot subdivision.

“Lot, unit” means a lot created from a parent lot and approved through the unit lot subdivision process. See also lot, parent, and unit lot subdivision.

“Low impact development” means a site design and/or structures that incorporate specific measures to reduce and compensate for adverse water quality or quantity impacts to critical areas or critical area buffers. Land use intensity may be reduced by incorporating low impact development techniques into a development proposal. See “Land use intensity.” Low impact development techniques include measures that reduce the quantity and improve the quality of storm water runoff. Specific suggested techniques are described in more detail in the Rural Stewardship Guide.

“Low-income housing” means housing that is affordable to a household that earns between 50 and 80 percent of the area median income, adjusted for household size. (see also “Extremely Low-income Housing” and “Very Low-income Housing”).

“Lower-carbon materials” means materials that simultaneously lower embodied and operational carbon emissions, reduce carbon footprint and enhance the materials’ circularity, compared to the conventional material choices without compromising the end product’s functional requirements and performance properties.

“Middle housing” means buildings that are compatible in scale, form, and character with single-family houses and contain two or more attached, stacked, or clustered homes including duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, townhouses, stacked flats, courtyard apartments, and/or cottage housing.

“Mitigation” means avoiding, minimizing, or compensating for adverse impacts.

“Moderate-income housing” means housing that is affordable to a household that earns between 80 percent and 100 percent of the area median income, adjusted for household size.

“Non-municipal urban growth area (NMUGA)” means an Urban Growth Area that is not associated with an incorporated city or town. See also Urban Growth Area (UGA).

“No net loss” means the maintenance of the aggregate total of the county shoreline ecological functions over time. The no net loss standard contained in WAC 173-26-186 requires that the impacts of shoreline use or development, whether permitted or exempt from permit requirements, be identified and mitigated such that there are no resulting adverse impacts on ecological functions or processes.

“Overburdened communities” means a geographic area where vulnerable populations face combined, multiple environmental harms and health impacts, and includes, but is not limited to, highly impacted communities as defined in RCW 19.405.020.

“Passive survivability” means the ability of a building to maintain critical life-support conditions for its occupants if services such as power, heating fuel, or water are lost for an extended period.

“Permanent supportive housing” means subsidized, leased housing with no limit on length of stay that prioritizes people who need comprehensive support services to retain tenancy and utilizes admissions practices designed to use lower barriers to entry than would be typical for other subsidized or unsubsidized rental housing, especially related to rental history, criminal history, and personal behaviors. Permanent supportive housing is paired with on-site or off-site voluntary services designed to support a person living with a complex and disabling behavioral health or physical health condition who was experiencing homelessness or was at imminent risk of homelessness prior to moving into housing to retain their housing and be a successful tenant in a housing arrangement, improve the resident’s health status, and connect the resident of the housing with community-based health care, treatment, or employment services. Permanent supportive housing is subject to all the rights and responsibilities defined in Chapter 59.18 RCW.

“Policy” means a specific statement in the Comprehensive Plan that guides decision-making. It indicates a clear commitment of the Board. A policy is based on a comprehensive plan’s goals and objectives as well as the analysis of data. A policy is carried out by implementation measures (such as zoning, land division, and environmental ordinances).

“Prescriptive regulations” means development regulations that provide specific standards.

“Public facilities” means facilities owned and/or maintained by the County or another public agency, including streets, roads, highways, sidewalks, street and road lighting systems, traffic signals, domestic water systems, storm and sanitary sewer systems, parks and recreational facilities, and schools.

“Public services” means services provided by the County or another public agency, including fire protection and suppression, law enforcement, public health, education, recreation, environmental protection, and other governmental services.

“Public transportation” means a wide variety of passenger transportation services available to the public including buses, ferries, rideshare, and rail transit.

“Public water” means any system providing water intended for, or used for, human consumption or other domestic uses. It includes, but is not limited to, facilities where water is furnished to any community, or number of individuals, or is made available to the public for human consumption or domestic use, excluding water systems serving one single family residence (RCW 70A.100).

“Publicly accessible” means open to the general public for passage, recreation, or shopping.

“Reasonably funded” means a mitigation measure or other transportation improvement that is scheduled for completion and is designated as funded in the current version of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) of the County or City/Town.

“Regional shopping center” means a large retail complex, often enclosed with inward-facing stores and parking, anchored by multiple stores or major retailers, offering a wide variety of general merchandise, apparel, services, and dining to a broad geographic area, serving as a key retail and cultural hub for a region.

“Religious organization” means the federally protected practice of a recognized religious assembly, school, or institution that owns or controls real property.

“Rural character” means the patterns of land use and development established by a county in the rural element of its comprehensive plan:

- a) In which open space, the natural landscape, and vegetation predominate over the built environment;
- b) That foster traditional rural lifestyles, rural-based economies, and opportunities to both live and work in rural areas;
- c) That provide visual landscapes that are traditionally found in rural areas and communities;
- d) That are compatible with the use of the land by wildlife and for fish and wildlife habitat;
- e) That reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development;
- f) That generally do not require the extension of urban governmental services; and
- g) That are consistent with the protection of natural surface water flows and groundwater and surface water recharge and discharge areas.

“Rural cluster” means a clustered residential project approved pursuant to Chapter 16.17 ICC. Higher densities are achieved in exchange for preserving open space and may include affordable housing. A rural cluster may include detached or attached dwelling units, and tiny houses.

“Rural development” means development outside the urban growth area and outside agricultural, forest, and mineral resource lands designated pursuant to RCW 36.70A.170. Rural development can consist of a variety of uses and residential densities, including clustered residential development, at levels that are consistent with the preservation of rural character and the requirements of the rural element. Rural development does not refer to agriculture or forestry activities that may be conducted in rural areas.

“Rural government services” means those public services and public facilities historically and typically delivered at an intensity usually found in rural areas, and may include domestic water systems, fire and police protection services, transportation and public transit services, and other public utilities associated with rural development and normally not associated with urban areas. Rural services do not include storm or sanitary sewers, except as otherwise authorized by RCW 36.70A.110(4).

“Rural lands” means all lands which are not within an urban growth area and are not designated as natural resource lands having long term commercial significance for production of agricultural products, timber, or the extraction of minerals.

“Rural sprawl” means low-density residential development that is scattered outside LAMIRDs and UGAs or commercial strip development along arterial highways leading into and out of LAMIRDs and UGAs.

“Sanitary sewer systems” means all facilities, including approved on-site disposal facilities, used in the collection, transmission, storage, treatment of discharge of any waterborne waste, whether domestic in origin or a combination of domestic, commercial or industrial waste.

“Scenic highways” means a Washington State designation for highways that have particular scenic characteristics. This designation was originally initiated to control billboards.

“Seismic hazard areas” means areas subject to severe risk of damage as a result of earthquake induced ground shaking, slope failure, settlement, or soil liquefaction.

“Sensitive species” means a species native to the State of Washington, that is vulnerable or declining and is likely to become endangered or threatened in a significant portion of its range within the State without cooperative management or the removal of threats as designated by WAC 232-12-011.

“Single-family dwelling” means a building designed or used for residential purposes by not more than one (1) family and containing one (1) dwelling unit. A mobile home or mobile/manufactured home, including a modular home, shall be considered a single-family dwelling. See also “Accessory dwelling unit (ADU), detached, duplex and triplex” and the definition of “Attached.” Unless otherwise specified, all single-family dwellings are detached dwellings units.

“Single-family residence” means a “Single-family dwelling.”

“Short-term rental” means a type of lodging, that is not a hotel or motel, in which a dwelling unit, or portion of a dwelling unit, that is offered or provided to a guest(s) by the owner of the dwelling unit or portion of the dwelling unit for a fee for fewer than 30 consecutive nights.

“Species of local importance” means those species that may not be endangered, threatened or sensitive from a statewide perspective, but are of local concern due to their population status, sensitivity to habitat manipulation, or other educational, cultural or historic attributes.

“Stacked flat” means dwelling units in a residential building of no more than three stories on a residential zoned lot in which each floor may be separately rented or owned.

“Suburban” means blending or characterized by the blending of the urban and the rural. A land use development pattern that is dispersed as opposed to decentralized.

“Subarea plan” means a detailed plan for a small geographic area within the county, focused on local issues, problems, and opportunities, and may address land use, economic, social, and other issues of local concern at a finer level of detail than in the general policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

“Tiny home” means a site-built, or approved by the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries if factory-built, residence including provisions for sleeping, cooking, and sanitation with under 400 square feet of conditioned space not including any loft space.

“Townhouse” means a row of three (3) or more attached single family dwellings. Each unit has its own front entryway.

“Transit” means passenger bus service available for the use by the public and generally operated on fixed routes with fixed schedules.

“Transit routes” means county roads identified in the adopted transportation elements of the respective political subdivision used by Island Transit. Those roads used by Island Transit that are not identified in the referenced transportation elements will be considered for inclusion in the plans as transit routes during updates of the transportation elements and are not considered transit routes until they are so identified. For the purposes of this chapter, transit routes do not include state facilities nor the intersection of state and county arterials/transit routes.

“Transitional housing” means a project that provides housing and supportive services to homeless persons or families for up to two years and that has as its purpose facilitating the movement of homeless persons and families into independent living.

“Transportation demand management” means managing transportation demand, usually to reduce it or to shift it to different times, locations, routes, or modes all designed to increase the number of person-trips which can be carried on the highway system without significantly increasing the design capacity of the highway system and without increasing the number of through traffic lanes.

“Transportation improvement program (TIP)” means a plan or schedule showing specific expenditures for transportation capital projects over a specific time period, often for six years.

“Transportation facilities” means capital facilities related to air, water, or land transportation.

“Transportation level of service standards” means a measure that describes the operational condition of the travel stream and acceptable adequacy requirements. Such standards may be expressed in terms such as speed and travel time, freedom to maneuver, traffic interruptions, comfort, convenience, geographic accessibility, and safety.

“Tribal lands” means sacred sites, traditional cultural properties, burial grounds, and other tribal sites protected by federal or state law.

“Trip” means a one-direction movement, which begins at the origin at the start time, ends at the destination at the arrival time, and is conducted for a specific purpose.

“Trip generation” means the analysis and application of the relationships between the trip makers, the urban area, and the trip making.

“Triplex” means a dwelling unit, or portion thereof, designed for occupancy by three (3) families living independently of each other, doing their own cooking and containing three (3) dwelling units. Such dwelling units have a common roof, or the dwelling units are joined by a common roof.

“Unincorporated” means the communities and areas outside the jurisdictional boundaries of incorporated cities.

“Unit lot subdivision” means the division of a parent lot into two or more unit lots within a development and approved through the unit lot subdivision process. See also lot, unit and lot, parent.

“Urban governmental services” means those governmental services historically and typically delivered by cities, and include storm and sanitary sewer systems, domestic water systems, street cleaning services, fire and police protection services, public transit services, and other public utilities associated with urban areas and normally not associated with rural areas.

“Urban growth” means growth (commercial, industrial, and residential) that makes intensive use of land for the location of buildings, structures, and impermeable surfaces to such a degree as to be incompatible with the primary use of such land for the production of food, other agricultural products, or fiber, or the extraction of mineral resources, rural uses, rural development, and natural resource lands designated pursuant to RCW 36.70A.170. A pattern of more intensive rural development, as provided in RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d), is not urban growth. When allowed to spread over wide areas, urban growth typically requires urban governmental services. “Characterized by urban growth” refers to land having urban growth located on it, or to land located in relationship to an area with urban growth on it as to be appropriate for urban growth.

“Urban growth area (UGA)” means an area designated by the County pursuant to RCW 36.70A.110 within which most new growth is planned for and encouraged to locate. Urban Growth Areas include incorporated cities and towns (municipalities) along with any unincorporated area designated for future urban growth and annexation into the municipality’s corporate limits. Urban Growth Areas also may be non-municipal, such as the Freeland NMUGA. Regulatory control of land within unincorporated Urban Growth Areas remains with the County until annexed into a city. The land and development controls within unincorporated Urban Growth Areas, however, may be subject to joint county/city or tribal interlocal planning agreements and concurrency.

“Urban sprawl” means development which manifests itself in one or more of the following patterns (a) Leapfrog development which bypasses vacant parcels located closer to the urban area that are suitable for development and instead locates away from existing urban areas; (b) strip development which allows commercial, retail, and multi-family residential developments to locate in a linear pattern along both sides of a major arterial; and (c) large expanses of low density, single-family dwelling development.

“Very low-income housing” means housing that is affordable to a household that earns between 30 and 50 percent of the area median income, adjusted for household size. (see also “Extremely Low-income Housing” and “Low-income Housing”).

“Vulnerable populations” means communities that experience a disproportionate cumulative risk from environmental burdens due to:

- Adverse socioeconomic factors, including unemployment, high housing and transportation costs relative to income, access to food and health care, and linguistic isolation; and
- Sensitivity factors, such as low birth weight and higher rates of hospitalization.

“Water residence time” means the length of time water spends in the groundwater portion of the hydrologic cycle.

“Wetlands” means areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of wetland vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas. Wetlands include those artificial wetlands intentionally created from non-wetland areas created to mitigate conversion of wetlands. Wetlands do not include those artificial wetlands intentionally created from non-wetland sites, including, but not limited to, irrigation and drainage ditches, grass-lined swales, canals, detention facilities, wastewater treatment facilities, farm ponds, and landscape amenities, or those wetlands created after July 1, 1990, that were unintentionally created as a result of the construction of a road, street, or highway.

“Wildlife corridors” means the pathways or linkages between habitats. For most large and highly mobile species, wildlife corridors provide habitat sufficient to facilitate movement but are not usually the primary habitat. Species with limited mobility may need to reside within wildlife corridors and only achieve migration over multiple generations.

“Wildland urban interface (WUI)” means the geographical area where structures and other human development meets or intermingles with wildland vegetative fuels.

“Zone” means a legislatively designed and enacted policy, including standards, a detailed map, and other criteria, all of which control and define areas of physical development of the county or any part thereof and which are classified by the zoning ordinance, and shown in the Island County Zoning Atlas, as available for certain uses and unavailable for other certain uses.

“Zoning” means the demarcation of an area by ordinance into zones and the establishment of regulations to govern the uses within those zones and the location, bulk, height, shape, and coverage of structures within each zone.

“Zoning atlas” means the official maps that depict the zone classifications established by the Zoning Code and the Freeland Zoning Code. The zoning atlas is maintained by the Planning Director.

INTRODUCTION



Island County Comprehensive Plan

2025 Periodic Update

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Island County Vision Statement

Island County strives to grow our communities in ways that respect the people who lived here in the past, that responds to those who live here today, and accommodates those desiring to live here in the future. We will protect our vital natural resources, our wild and natural places, our working farms and forests, and our shorelines that contribute to our unique island life. We strive to create capacity for all our residents and meet their needs equitably, in pursuit of a thriving economy and resilient community.

INTRODUCTION

I COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

The Island County Comprehensive Plan is the document that provides the broad policy basis for Island County's land use planning program and sets the framework to guide land use decisions within the county. The plan identifies ways that the County's land use planning efforts will implement state and regional requirements, including the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) and administrative codes. Equally important, the plan acts to coordinate actions with local jurisdictions, service providers, and state and federal agencies that may have a stake in Island County's land use policies and implementing regulations and actions.

In addition to its legislative and coordination roles, the comprehensive plan also reflects community values and aspirations about the county's future. The plan aims to organize county actions and programs that define relationships between land use goals and policies and community livability, economic vitality, provision of needed public facilities, and environmental stewardship.

II REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The GMA was passed in 1990 in response to rapid population growth, concerns with suburban sprawl, environmental protection, and quality of life. It provides direction regarding:

- Jurisdictions must create a comprehensive plan consistent with the goals of the GMA
- The plan must account for the next 20 years of population growth
- Plans are reviewed every 10 years and updated if necessary; this review will be for years 2025 - 2045
- Must include public participation early and often
- Plans are implemented through capital investment and development regulations

Key Considerations:

- Urban Growth Areas (UGAs):
 - Coupeville: two parcels were added to the Town's UGA.
 - Langley: changed the Priority Growth Area and areas of Long-term Rural Significance identified in the city's Joint Planning Area.
 - Oak Harbor: annexation of lands into city limits and interlocal agreement to study UGA areas for future planning.
 - Freeland: dedicated funding to study wastewater solutions to support growth in the Non-Municipal UGA.
- Housing:
 - Changes to remove barriers, address displacement risks, and make adequate provisions for housing at all income levels, consistent with House Bill 1220 (HB 1220) passed in the Washington State legislature in 2021.
- Environment / Climate:
 - New Climate Element to meet HB 1181 and the Climate Commitment Act requirements.
 - Increased measures to protect water quality and aquifers from risks of development.

- Best available science and no-net-loss requirements incorporated into critical areas policies.
- Policies to support sustainable forest management and increased protections of agricultural lands.
- Infrastructure:
 - Combined the Capital Facilities and Utilities Elements.
 - Updates to the County's 6- and 20-year capital facilities project lists.
 - Planning for septic and sewer infrastructure to support housing.
 - Changes to multi-modal level of service, complete streets, active transportation, public transit, transportation/land use integration, and safety for all users.
 - Updates to the parks and recreation inventory, funding strategies, and updates to active and passive uses.
- Economic Development:
 - Utilized the goals and policies in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.
- Clinton:
 - New subarea plan to address housing, infrastructure, and economic development in the Rural Residential and Rural Center areas of Clinton.

II.I State Planning Goals

The GMA sets forth statutory goals for the guidance of the cities and counties required to plan under the act in RCW 36.70A.020. In addition, RCW 36.70A.480 states that the goals and policies of the state Shoreline Management Act, as set forth in RCW 90.58.020, are added as one of the goals as presented in RCW 36.70A.020.

The GMA goals as presented in RCW 36.70A.020 and RCW 36.70A.480 are outlined below.

- **Urban Growth:** Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.
- **Reduce Sprawl:** Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low density development.
- **Transportation:** Encourage efficient multi-modal transportation systems that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and per capita vehicle miles traveled and are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.
- **Housing:** Plan for and accommodate housing affordable to all economic segments of the population, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of the existing housing stock.
- **Economic Development:** Encourage economic development that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, promote economic opportunities for all citizens, especially for unemployed and for disadvantaged persons, promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses and recruitment of new businesses, recognize regional differences impacting economic development opportunities, and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of natural resources, public services, and public facilities.
- **Property Rights:** Private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made. The property rights of landowners shall be protected from arbitrary and discriminatory actions.

- **Permits:** Applications for both state and local government permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.
- **Natural Resource Industries:** Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agricultural, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forest lands and productive agricultural lands and discourage incompatible uses.
- **Open Space and Recreation:** Retain open space and green space, enhance recreational opportunities, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreation facilities.
- **Environment:** Protect the environment and enhance the state’s quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.
- **Citizen Participation and Coordination:** Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process, including the participation of vulnerable populations and overburdened communities, neighboring Tribes, and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.
- **Public Facilities and Services:** Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards.
- **Historic Preservation:** Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures that have historical or archaeological significance.
- **Climate Change and Resiliency.** Ensure that comprehensive plans, development regulations, and regional policies, plans, and strategies under RCW 36.70A.210 and chapter 47.80 RCW adapt to and mitigate the effects of a changing climate; support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and per capita vehicle miles traveled; prepare for climate impact scenarios; foster resiliency to climate impacts and natural hazards; protect and enhance environmental, economic, and human health and safety; and advance environmental justice.
- **Shorelines of the State:** For shorelines of the state, the goals and policies of the shoreline management act as set forth in RCW 90.58.020 shall be considered an element of the county’s or city’s comprehensive plan.

III ISLAND COUNTY VISION STATEMENT

Island County strives to grow our communities in ways that respect the people who lived here in the past, that responds to those who live here today and accommodates those desiring to live here in the future. We will protect our vital natural resources, our wild and natural places, our working farms and forests, and our shorelines that contribute to our unique island life. We strive to create capacity for all our residents and meet their needs equitably, in pursuit of a thriving economy and resilient community.

III.I Planning for the Future of Island County

Island County is primarily made up of two unique islands: Whidbey and Camano. Our islands are host to small towns, rural residences, large and small farms, sizable forests, and shorelines dotted with homes that allow residents and visitors alike to enjoy the marine environment. As islands, we have finite resources. Our drinking water comes from sole source aquifers, we have constrained amounts of prime farmland with soils sufficient to grow our food, and we have limited land to support dense development. Comprehensive planning on islands requires that we keep these constraints at the forefront, and plan for growth in a thoughtful and measured way that centers conservation of resources and resiliency.

People live in Island County for many reasons - to be close to family, for a job or deployment, to move away from the city, or to retire. They stay because of a quieter way of life with a strong sense of community, access to open space and recreation, and beautiful views of rural lands, mountain ranges, and shorelines. Many island families have resided here for generations, contributing to the cultural and living history.

Our communities change and grow over time. Communities are framed by the people who live and work here. As residents age, babies are born, and new residents move here our communities adapt and start to look and feel different. The people who live here shape our stories - they bring new ideas, open stores and restaurants, work the farms that provide our food, and build the houses we live in. Over generations, people inevitably leave their mark on our islands in ways big and small.

Key to building a thriving economy and healthy community is ensuring businesses have housing for their employees, school enrollment is growing, healthcare and services are readily available, and our population represents generations of people at different stages of their lives. The County's last comprehensive plan under-planned the amount of growth that would occur over the 20-year planning period. The effect of underestimating growth is clear, we continue to lack a variety of housing types across our communities to support residents at all ages and income levels.

The state mandated housing changes for the 2025 Comprehensive Plan will challenge us to meet the needs of all members of our communities, at all income levels. It's our statutory duty to create places in our communities for everyone to live and thrive. The resounding input from residents is that they want the physical mark left on this place by growth over the next 20 years to be small, and we should protect our rural lands from too much growth.

Comprehensive planning presents an opportunity to prepare for the change that will happen in our communities over the next 20 years in ways that protect our unique island life. There will be tensions and compromises to be made. Change will happen whether we plan for it or whether we do nothing at all. We cannot stop it, though we can guide it in ways that are adaptive and responsive to our vision and values.

Our aim with this comprehensive plan update is to protect rural lands, and encourage urban areas to look, feel, and function more like small and medium sized cities. We must plan for the infrastructure and services needed to support new housing types where density already exists. We must be creative and consider new and innovative ways to meet the needs of our residents today, and 20 years into the future.

III.II Value Statements

In Island County We Value:

- **Economic vibrancy** through a diverse and resilient economy that supports small and large businesses, the Navy, local government, healthcare employers, tourism, a vibrant arts community, and local agriculture that supports all sizes of farms.
- **Protection of natural resources**, including our aquifers, farms, forests, wetlands, shorelines, and marine environment in support of residents for generations to come.
- **Equal access to housing** through slow and thoughtful planned density with accompanying infrastructure and services for all ages and incomes.
- **Reliable utilities and infrastructure** including multi-modal transportation that allows us to travel with ease across both islands, water and wastewater solutions that protect the environment, and access to technology that connects us to the rest of the world.
- **Access to the outdoors** and all the beauty and diversity of our islands with healthy activity options for all ages.

- **Health equity** and access to robust and affordable healthcare, human services, and food security to support our resident’s ability to stay healthy at all stages of their lives.
- **Emergency preparedness and climate resilience** to ensure our residents have safe access to food, water, and shelter as we plan for, adapt, and respond to a changing world.
- **Community** and a sense of connectedness through walkable towns, historic places, gathering spaces, safe neighborhoods, and a commitment to keeping this place special.

IV PURPOSE AND COMPONENTS OF THIS PLAN

This comprehensive plan has been developed in accordance with the GMA, chapter 36.70A RCW, to address growth issues in Island County. It represents the community’s policy plan for growth through the year 2045 (a 20-year planning period). The essence of policy planning is that it provides the community with an expressed set of statements defining the direction and character of future development, which clearly integrate the goals and objectives of the GMA.

Table I-1. Plan Chapter Contents

Plan Chapter	Description of Contents
1. Land Use	<p>Establishes the land use designations and general policy framework for the land use planning program that seeks to establish the desired character and pattern of development, while protecting the quality of life, economic opportunities, and natural environment of the community. Included in this topic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population and Employment Projections • Buildable Lands Analysis • Land Use Designations for Urban, Rural, and Resource Lands <p>Also includes the Rural Lands element - Addressing the necessary strategies and programs to ensure land uses outside of areas designated for urban growth are compatible with traditional rural uses and economic activities.</p>
2. Economic Development	Establishes goals, policies, objectives, and provisions for economic growth and vitality and a high quality of life.
3. Shoreline Management	RESERVED – Not Updated in 2025
4. Housing	Establishes requirements to develop a variety of housing types to meet the needs, of present and future residents at all income levels.
5. Historic Preservation	RESERVED – Not Updated in 2025
6. Natural Resources	<p>Establishes the framework for designating and regulating land uses to preserve areas critical to the health, safety, and welfare of the community. Included in this topic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wetlands • Aquifer Recharge Areas • Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas • Frequently Flooded Areas • Geologically Hazardous Areas • Water Quality & Quantity
7. Parks & Recreation	Provides the framework and coordination necessary for the retention and possible expansion of open space and the provision of a wide variety of parks and recreational opportunities.
8. Transportation	Outlines improvements or strategies to accommodate existing and proposed land uses, while encouraging efficient multi-modal transportation systems to support the community and region.

Plan Chapter	Description of Contents
9. Utilities	RESERVED – Combined with Capital Facilities
10. Capital Facilities / Utilities (combined)	Addresses the appropriate coordination, location, and delivery of adequate public facilities and services to support existing and proposed land uses, including a funding plan. Establishes the preferred siting of and coordination necessary to ensure utilities are available for existing and proposed land uses.
11. Climate	NEW – Addresses planning and preparation for resilience to climate related changes including extreme heat, drought, and sea level rise.

The benefits of a policy plan are as follows:

- Public understanding and participation in the planning process are facilitated by the uncomplicated character of the policy statements.
- Elected officials become closely involved in the planning process through definition of explicit policy statements.
- Several diverse agencies and interests making development decisions in the community may utilize the policy plan as a coordinating device.
- Policy planning provides stability and consistency in the planning program notwithstanding changes in conditions of a community.

The guiding functions of the policy plan are:

- Useful in the adoption of land use codes by legislative bodies.
- Applicable in the administration of development controls and incentives by responsible officials.
- Necessary to provide a reasonable and fair means of amending the comprehensive plan and development regulations with a supporting record that will withstand challenge.

The role of this plan is:

- To set goals and policies to guide growth in the County through the year 2045.
- To develop future land use patterns and maps.
- To establish a specific program for plan implementation.

IV.I Central Themes

- Board Priorities: Health, Equity, and Climate Resilience. **(All Elements)**
- Utilize creative housing solutions that fit into the rural landscape, accommodate housing at all income levels, and direct the majority of new housing to areas where density already exists. **(Land Use, Housing, and Natural Resources)**
- Plan for infrastructure to support new and existing development including community septic systems, connecting new development to public drinking water systems, stormwater management, and better coordination with cities for serving urban growth areas (UGAs). **(Land Use and Capital Facilities)**
- Protect sole source aquifers and drinking water through water conservation measures, low impact development, and better utilization of tax and incentive programs. **(Land Use, Natural Resources, and Climate)**

- Support large and small agriculture by minimizing surrounding land use conflicts, discouraging conversion of farmland, and minimizing barriers to farmers economic success. **(Land Use, Economic Development, and Natural Resources)**
- Protect natural lands from development using best available science, a no-net-loss approach, and strategic conservation of lands that will provide connectivity and value to wildlife and ecosystems. **(Land Use, Natural Resources, Parks, and Climate)**
- Prioritize housing for full-time residents and better manage the impact of short-term rentals on the housing stock. **(Housing)**
- Prepare for a changing climate so our communities are resilient to the impacts of extreme heat, drought, and rising sea levels. **(Climate)**
- Provide multimodal transportation opportunities on both islands and maintain ease of travel throughout the county. **(Capital Facilities and Transportation)**
- Support economic resiliency through diversified businesses and support of creative industries. **(Economic Development)**

V PLAN UPDATES

V.I Annual Docket Process

To be responsive to changing conditions, Island County updates this plan through the annual docket process, ensuring that the plan remains a viable tool for decision-makers and citizens to use when seeking policy direction regarding land use and Island County’s future. Timely and thorough review of the plan will assist in keeping it responsive to the needs of local citizens.

Amendments may be made to the comprehensive plan once a year only after careful analysis of cumulative impact of proposals and developing trends and a finding that the proposed amendment is in the common interest of the people of Island County. The GMA directs the creation of a process and procedures for plan amendments and establishes the annual “docket” process (RCW 36.70A.130(4)), but the specific processes and procedures are left to the County to determine. For Island County, the process of amending the comprehensive plan and related development regulations, including the annual docket process, timing, and application requirements, are located in Chapter 16.10 ICC.

The 2025 update included a new process for amendments and includes a multi-year work plan to be reviewed annually to determine which elements will be updated each year, based on staffing and resources available, legal need, and competing priorities. Annual docket items will create the annual work plan for the Long Range Planning team, and will include:

- Each of the plan chapters
- Related updates and implementation programs
- Subarea planning efforts
- Annual documentation, reporting and cleanup efforts
- Ongoing intergovernmental coordination; and
- Additional major projects (i.e. decennial census, etc.).

V.II Periodic Update

For the comprehensive plan to remain current, it needs to be reviewed and updated periodically. State law requires jurisdictions to periodically conduct a thorough review of their plan and regulations to bring them up to date with any relevant changes in the GMA and to respond to changes in land use or population growth.

The plan shall be reviewed by the Planning Commission at least every periodic update, based on the schedule identified by the GMA as found in RCW 36.70A.130(5), making recommendations to improve the entire plan. When preparing periodic updates to the comprehensive plan, all comprehensive plan elements shall utilize most current data available from local, state, federal sources.

V.III Overview of 2025 Update

House Bill 1220 (Housing): The Housing Element of Island County's 2025 Comprehensive Plan update must comply with HB 1220 passed in 2021 by the Washington Legislature, which mandates that jurisdictions plan for and accommodate housing at all income levels. Under HB 1220, jurisdictions are required to evaluate whether they have sufficient land capacity to allow for the housing types and amounts identified at all income levels. If there is insufficient capacity, the jurisdiction must identify and implement zoning changes and land use allowances that provide enough capacity prior to adoption of the comprehensive plan.

House Bill 1181 (Climate): In 2023 the Washington State Legislature passed HB 1181, requiring local governments across the state to plan for climate impacts as part of their comprehensive plan processes. The bill added a fourteenth goal to the GMA to address climate resilience and required a Climate Resiliency Sub-Element for all fully planning counties and cities. The focus of the resilience sub-element is to assess how climate change is impacting our communities, highlight communities that may be more vulnerable to local impacts, and identify strategies that support adaptation and increase community resilience.

Growth Projections: To comply with the GMA requirements and calculate a population projection for the 20-year planning period, Island County reviewed the County demographic characteristics, economic conditions, and past growth trends, as well as data from the State of Washington and the U.S. Census Bureau. Based on this research, the County arrived at the following conclusions:

- In the year 2045, Island County is projected to have a population of 99,202. The 2020 census determined that Island County had a population of 86,857; this represents a total projected increase of 12,345 people over a 25-year period.
- The median age of Island County is higher than the state as a whole and is increasing at a faster rate.
- Island County's 1998 and 2005 comprehensive plan population projections significantly overestimated future population growth, while the 2016 population projection significantly underestimated future population growth.
- NASWI indicates that at the time of this report, there are no plans to add additional personnel in the next 20-year period.

VI IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Implementation of the comprehensive plan is an ongoing process involving all sectors of the community and all departments in the County. Code amendments, capital improvements, and everyday permitting and land use decisions, which affect the quality of life on the Islands will greatly depend on the desires and level of citizen support given to the planning effort. The effectiveness and value of this plan will only be measured over an extended period of time when citizens and local officials have an opportunity to achieve common objectives.

The general goals and policies should first be viewed as an overall framework for future decision making. Public and private interests must carefully examine this statement of comprehensive planning policy to ensure cooperation and coordination in meeting common objectives.

Beyond revisions to development regulations, it is necessary for public and private interests to work in a spirit of cooperation to implement the plan. Policies within the plan provide overall guidance for decision making, offering flexibility to developments and innovations which achieve common objectives. The plan has been intentionally formulated to provide guidelines for future development, which foster a high-quality living environment for all citizens at the lowest possible public cost.

The following is an outline of general areas of implementation strategies. For this comprehensive plan to succeed, it is of utmost importance to proceed on schedule to accomplish all of these items. A specific implementation plan, developed from the strategies located within the goals and policies section of each chapter, is included in the appendices.

VI.I Subarea Planning

Clinton

A subarea plan was completed for the Clinton LAMIRDs as part of the County's 2025 Comprehensive Plan update. Further studies will be needed to determine if Clinton can transition into a NMUGA before the next comprehensive plan update to support more housing and commercial growth.

Camano Island

The County may also explore the viability of creating a subarea plan for Camano Island at a future date, to be determined via the annual docket process.

VI.II Programs & Partnerships

Interlocal Agreements

- A. The County will work with Oak Harbor to update the interlocal agreements to assist in guiding development in the unincorporated portions of the UGAs.
- B. The County will work with the Town of Coupeville and the City of Langley to update the interlocal agreements regarding the JPA and the joint planning processes.
- C. Working with the municipalities, the County will establish procedures to assist in coordinated review of land use and capital projects in JPAs.

Countywide Planning Policies

As outlined in the Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs), it is essential to successful plan implementation that the County continue to work closely with all jurisdictions and districts within its boundaries. Close coordination and cooperation is necessary to ensure effective land use planning and ensure full and efficient use of UGAs.

The CPPs establish the framework from which county, town and city comprehensive plans are developed and adopted. The CPPs provide the foundation for assuring that consistency criteria, required between county and city planning under the GMA, are fulfilled. The CPPs were jointly and collaboratively developed and adopted by Island County and the jurisdictions of Coupeville, Oak Harbor, and Langley on June 22, 1992, and most recently updated in 2023 (a major update). The CPPs provided guidance in development of this Comprehensive Plan.

The Countywide Planning Policies are updated before each periodic update to ensure jurisdictions are working together to accomplish shared goals for population growth, housing and employment projections, and development in UGAs.

Planning Coordination

Coordinating and developing partnerships with other governments and government agencies is important to address and mitigate the impacts that climate change has on our natural resources, such as declining salmon runs and declining populations of shellfish. The protection and recovery of listed salmonoid species should be a priority in Island County due to their significance to Tribes, salt and freshwater ecosystems, and recreational and commercial fisheries.

VI.III Other Relevant County Plans and Documents

Homeless Housing Plan

Island County Human Services is updating the 5-year Homeless Housing Plan which outlines objectives and actions to meet the emergency housing and needs of individuals in crisis in our community. This plan is updated every five years and will serve as an implementation tool for achieving the emergency shelter requirements of our comprehensive plan housing allocations.

Capital Facilities Plan / Capital Improvement Plan

The 20-year Capital Facilities Plan, and 6-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) are implementation tools the County uses to prioritize capital expenditures and projects. The Public Works Department leads the CIP process annually and Planning will continue to work collaboratively with Public Works to ensure comprehensive plan items are included and addressed.

Comprehensive Economic Development Study (CEDS)

CEDS is a long-term, consensus-driven, local planning document that intends to guide economic development throughout the region and county. The Economic Development Administration (EDA) manages and sets the content guidelines and requirements for the CEDS process and document. The Island County Economic Development Council managed the development of the CEDS.

The final Island County CEDS 2024-2028 was unanimously approved by Resolution C-25-24 by the Island County Board of Commissioners on July 2, 2024, making Island County jurisdictions and public agencies eligible to apply for EDA grant funding.

Shoreline Master Program

Shoreline Master Programs (SMPs) are local land-use policies and regulations that guide use of Washington's Shorelines. SMPs apply to both public and private uses for Washington's lakes, streams, and marine shorelines. Island County Board of County Commissioners locally adopted a new SMP in 2025; its implementation is pending state review. The Shoreline Element of this Comprehensive Plan will be updated to be consistent with the new SMP once final.

Department Work Plans

Every year each department in the County prepares an annual work plan which can include implementation measures from the comprehensive plan update. Different departments may take on different implementation items such as code updates, mapping updates, process improvements, etc. Coordination between departments in developing the annual work plans to include comprehensive plan implementation will be an ongoing effort.

LAND USE



Island County Comprehensive Plan

2025 Periodic Update

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LAND USE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Land Use Element is the cornerstone of the Island County Comprehensive Plan. Its purpose is to ensure that an adequate supply of land and a desired mix of uses are available for projected growth and the successful implementation of the other comprehensive plan elements. This nexus is established through the Future Land Use Map and the adopted goals and policies.

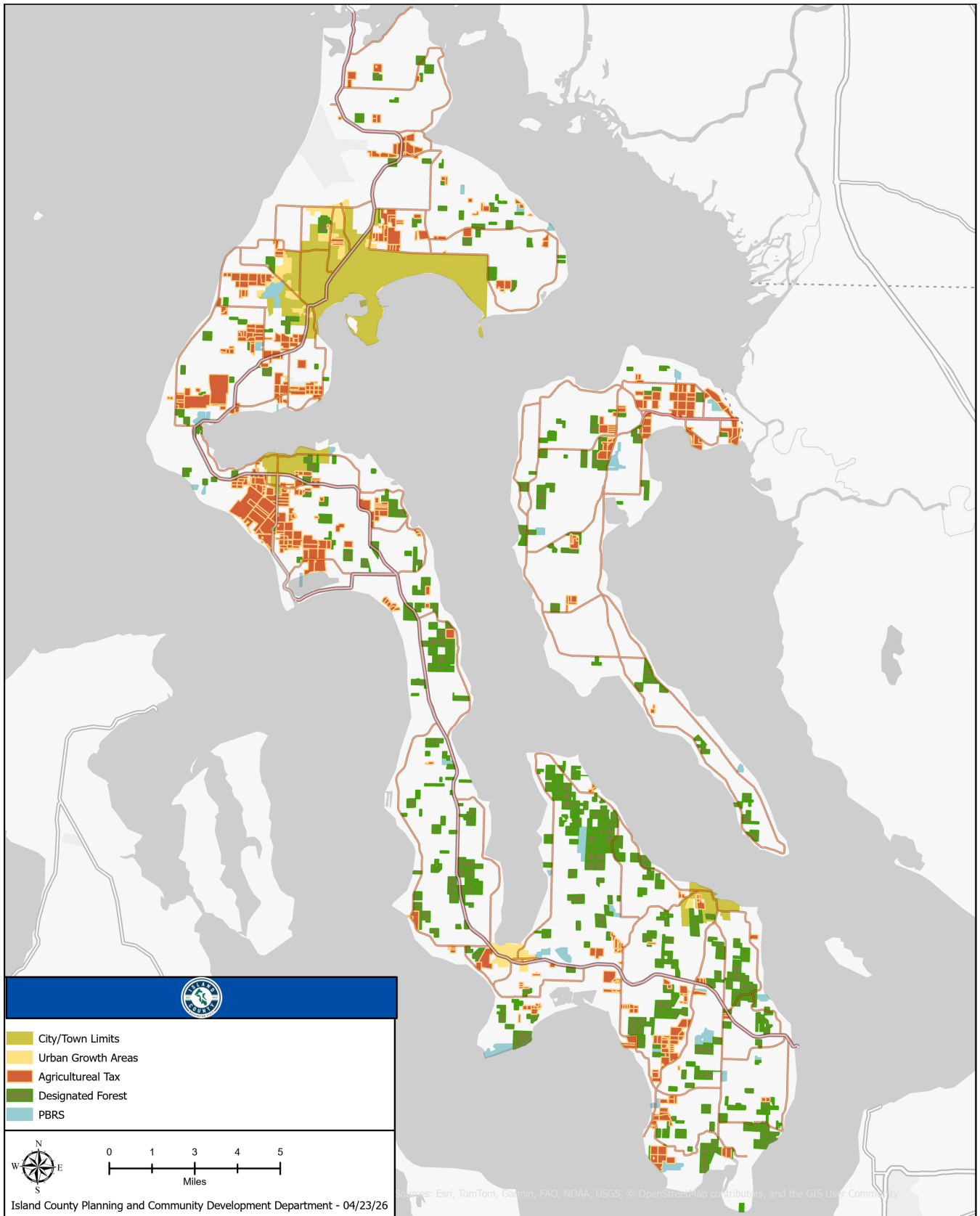
Guided by the County's vision statement, the Land Use goals and policies allow for Island County's growth and development over the next 20 years while protecting its one-of-a-kind landscape, unique ecology, natural resources, and farmlands. Island County's exceptional features attract residents and visitors from around the world. As the county grows, it strives to maintain those special characteristics that make it a great place to live, work, farm, fish, recreate, and visit.

The goals and policies in the Land Use Element reflect the County's values and form the basis of its land use strategy. Through its goals and policies, the County aims to promote climate resilience (see the Climate Element), reduce development pressures and patterns of sprawl within rural areas, agricultural lands, and other areas of long-term significance. At the same time, the County seeks to reduce land-consuming development patterns and provide a framework for urban development within existing neighborhoods and areas with more intensive development. These goals and policies provide a land use foundation to develop a healthy, diverse economy where employment, housing, retail and farming opportunities abound. They also preserve open space, shorelines, scenery, and cultural resources, while balancing public with private interests in the development and protection of Island County's resources. As such, the Land Use Element represents Island County's policy plan for growth and directs future land use and conservation decisions.

The County is responsible for setting goals and policies for its unincorporated areas, which are comprised of the unincorporated portions of municipal urban growth areas (UGAs), non-municipal UGAs (NMUGAs), rural lands, resource lands, special review districts, master planned resorts, and limited areas of more intensive rural development (LAMIRDs). UGAs are the areas in which urban growth is most suitable and appropriate. The County has three municipal UGAs and one NMUGA. Rural lands are lands not included in urban growth designations, or lands designated as agricultural, forest, or mineral resource lands. LAMIRDs permit the infill, development, or redevelopment of pre-existing rural communities outside of UGAs at a density greater than typical rural development.

The following sections provide detailed information about Island County's land use conditions and overall development strategy. For additional information about the comprehensive plan's regulatory framework, implementation strategies, and data regarding population, housing, or economic conditions and projections, refer to the plan's Introduction Section and the Appendices.

MAP 1A Designated Forest, Agriculture Tax, and Public Benefit Rating System (PBR) Properties



1.2 GROWTH ACCOMMODATIONS

Island County's population increased from 4,704 people in 1910 to 86,857 people by 2020, representing a compound annual growth rate of 2.68 percent.

The county's 2045 projected population is 99,202, based on the Office of Financial Management (OFM) mid-range projection adjusted down for infrastructure concerns on North Whidbey Island. This projects a total increase of 12,345 people, with 4,107 of those in the unincorporated county, over the 20-year planning period. This total population is less than previously projected in earlier environmental documentation, and more in line with observed growth in Island County (a population of 118,800 was projected for 2020 during the 1998 update, a population of 110,050 was projected for 2025 in the 2005 update, and a population of 87,917 was projected for 2036 in the 2016 update). Revised projections correspond to a minor reduction in anticipated impacts and a slight decrease in needed housing. (see Appendices).

1.3 FUTURE LAND USE CONCEPTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Island County proposes a definitive, effective growth management strategy that will fully implement all of the goals and policies set forth in the Growth Management Act (GMA) (RCW 36.70A) as well as respond to citizens' unique preferences and needs while also protecting resource lands, and the environment. The County recognizes that the future well-being of its citizens and the conservation of the county's resources depends on an effective land use strategy.

1.3.1 Measures to Protect Rural Character

Rural character is one of the county's most valued assets, providing the quality of life desired by many Island County residents. Low density developments foster privacy, individuality, and a sense of personal freedom. Community centers, such as shops and convenience stores, provide needed services and places for spontaneous or planned socialization with neighbors and friends. People in rural areas expect, tolerate, and prepare for the minor inconveniences that come with living in widely scattered and sparsely developed areas (e.g., many homes use alternative heat sources such as wood stoves and propane heating) and understand that infrastructure may be limited.

Transportation patterns in rural areas are characterized by meandering two-lane roads that offer pleasant views of forests, farms, fields, and the water. Travelers typically experience only short waits at stop signs with very few (or no) stop lights; traffic flows smoothly with few delays and pedestrians often walk on shoulders beside the road, rather than sidewalks.

Scattered convenience stores and small commercial centers serve small clusters of rural residents. Small towns or cities exist nearby, and the attractions of metropolitan areas generally are within a 1½ hour drive or less. Although these compact settlements are moderately dense in scale, the surrounding rural areas dominate the landscape.

Wildlife sightings are common in rural areas. Large, undeveloped areas provide habitat and assist with aquifer recharge. Lakes, ponds, wetlands, and streams are critical habitat areas as well as recreational amenities. There are more natural, informal recreation areas than formal recreational facilities, such as ball fields, bowling alleys, pickle ball courts, and golf courses. Passive recreation takes the form of pedestrian and equestrian trails winding through lands both private and public, and beaches.

Agricultural and forest lands, as well as undeveloped open space, contribute to rural character. This environment provides diverse and significant cultural/natural amenities. Views of old farmhouses and barns, historic buildings, and the cultural landscape attract many tourists and adds to the enjoyment of Whidbey and Camano Island residents. Island County's heritage is important and remains evident even as new development mixes with existing homes.

The historical pattern of growth in Island County has led to very few remaining large parcels of land. Since 1984, the minimum lot size has been five-acres for new development in rural areas, much of the County was subdivided into much smaller parcels prior to 1984 (note: there is a code provision for parcels less than 5 acres using lot size averaging to protect critical areas and open space without increasing density). Communities comprising small lots are interspersed with rural lots of 5, 10, and 20 acres. Residential development encompasses much of the county's shoreline; although parcel sizes vary in the county, many smaller lots are found in shoreline areas. This historical pattern allows many to live along the shoreline while preserving a degree of rural character for the majority of the county.

Rural areas provide an opportunity for different patterns of land use and development to exist side-by-side. Diversity in land uses is part of the rural character. Each landowner uses their property differently. Driving down a road, one might see vast farmlands or forests, hobby farms with large gardens and several animals (cows, horses, and goats), as well as home industries, residential estates, and commercial areas.

Island County's historic development patterns, particularly along shorelines and other water bodies, are a product of local circumstance. Previous comprehensive planning efforts have characterized rural area development in Island County as traditional rural pattern, in which concentrations of population are surrounded by working or natural open spaces. Towns and commercial centers have emerged at significant crossroads along highway corridors and shorelines. These centers are interspersed with areas of farming and forestry activities. Long established businesses in isolated areas serve the outlying population. More concentrated nodes of residential subdivisions occur on the shorelines. Within the island interior, a patchwork of open agricultural fields and forested hinterlands is occasioned by areas of more intensive development.

Island County faces the challenge of balancing the demands of population growth while protecting rural character.

1.3.1.1 Agriculture

Agriculture is an important part of life in Island County, providing jobs, preserving open space, contributing to local food production, and drawing business, residents, and tourists to the area. Following good agricultural practices, such as following ecological principles, can play an important role in improving air and water quality, and wildlife habitat. Food grown locally for Island County communities is healthier, lower in carbon emissions, enhances food security, and is more resilient to supply chain disruptions.

According to the USDA's profile for Island County, in 2022 there were 377 farms in Island County, totally over 17,000 acres, with the average farm size of 45 acres. However, there are 22 large farms ranging in size from 180 to 1,000+ acres, which provide a significant agricultural economic base and contribute to the rural character valued by county residents. Agricultural lands are an important component of Island County's rural atmosphere, which attracts residents and tourists and can also play an important role in improving air and water quality, and wildlife habitat. County residents strongly support the continued existence and maintenance of these uses.

Both commercial and non-commercial farming play important roles in preserving the rural character of Island County. Commercial farming, including small and mid-sized farms, provides income and local produce to residents. Non-commercial, or hobby farming, including growing fruits and vegetables, and raising of livestock for personal consumption, continues to be a wide-spread activity of local importance in the rural area of the county, providing a cultural connection to both the past and the future of Island County.

Conserving productive agricultural soils and encouraging farming operations as economically viable and ecologically valuable activities (and as an accepted way of life) is a challenge in Island County. Preserving and increasing farming are major goals of the plan. The plan and development regulations promote the preservation of agricultural lands of key aesthetic and historical significance, and where farming continues today, through public purchase of easements or of the land itself. Farmland is also preserved as agricultural open space through an array of regulations and programs, such as zoning for agricultural use and beneficial tax programs. Aligning economic development policies with incentives can help protect agricultural land from fragmentation and conversion to non-agricultural uses and protect recharge lands and working farmland.

1.3.1.2 Rural Clusters

This plan and development regulations promote use of clustered development is one tool that allows higher rural densities while preserving rural character. Developers or homeowners' associations generally own the protected land. For these reasons, clustering has been more successful in preserving open space and creating transitional areas between farms and residential areas than in protecting farmland.

Rural Clusters (RCs) and Rural Affordable Clusters (RACs) are replacing what is currently known as Planned Residential Developments (PRDs). RCs are different than PRDs as subdivision of land is not required, and there will be options for affordable, permanent supportive, or market rate housing, and with units being offered as both rental and ownership models.

The overall intent of the RCs process is to provide a pattern of development that does not detract from the rural character. Higher rural densities through diverse housing options and clustered development are buffered by open space areas in ways that are compatible with surrounding rural housing, agricultural, and forestry uses. The County continues to improve clustered development by connecting open space tracts and allowing open space uses, protecting wildlife, and encouraging affordable housing for all income levels in rural areas.

1.3.1.3 Rural To Urban Shift

In Island County, past development trends and land use regulations fostered a dispersed pattern of land use development. The County must now plan for growth in the context of a largely fragmented and dispersed land use and ownership pattern, which does not align with the philosophy of growth established under the GMA. A key concept is directing future growth and development within existing dense areas (i.e. LAMIRDs, UGAs) to conserve Island County's natural resources, critical areas, open space, farmlands, and rural characteristics. Major steps were taken during this Comprehensive Plan to overcome these past challenges.

The County's objective is to create efficient and attractive urban and rural communities while adhering to the goals and guidelines of the GMA. Joint planning efforts with municipalities are required to successfully shift growth to urban areas throughout the county. The Freeland area is the only urbanized area within the County's jurisdiction and is empowered by its NMUGA designation and development regulations to help accommodate growth in an urbanized area and limit sprawling development in rural areas. This rural-to-urban shift will be a consideration during the development of each comprehensive plan element.

In the Clinton Subarea Plan, the County proposes a study to explore the possibility of Clinton becoming a NMUGA, which will also support dense growth similar to the Freeland NMUGA. If Clinton becomes a NMUGA, it will allow more growth to be allocated to Clinton in future planning periods and preserve more rural areas from excessive development.

Camano Island does not have any urban areas. The County will be conducting a subarea plan with the community to help shape future development on Camano and how growth will be accommodated accordingly.

In this comprehensive plan, the municipalities of Coupeville, Langley, and Oak Harbor accepted 66.73 percent of the growth. In future comprehensive plans, Island County and the municipalities should expect at least 85 percent of the growth to occur within municipal UGAs. The County is ready to support municipalities as growth expectations shift towards urban areas.

Island County will continue to monitor the percentage of growth occurring in the rural areas and explore strategies to continue to avoid sprawl, preserve open space, and encourage growth in developed and urban areas.

1.3.2 Additional Considerations

1.3.2.1 Promotion of Physical Activity

Island County recognizes that physical activity is essential to maintaining good health and reducing the rates of chronic diseases. Opportunities for physical activity are provided throughout the County through compact urban growth patterns, public beaches (see the Shoreline Management Element), parks and recreation amenities (see the Parks and Recreation Element) and bicycle and pedestrian- friendly infrastructure (see the Transportation Element). Goals and policies included in this plan further Island County's commitment to creating healthy and active communities.

1.3.2.2 Public Health, Safety, and Welfare

At its core, the Land Use Element should support development that provides for the health, safety, and welfare of County residents. This is achieved by consideration of climate resilience and hazards and discouraging inappropriate siting of uses (e.g., placing development in geologically hazardous areas) and through land use regulations (e.g., Airport and Aviation Safety Overlay).

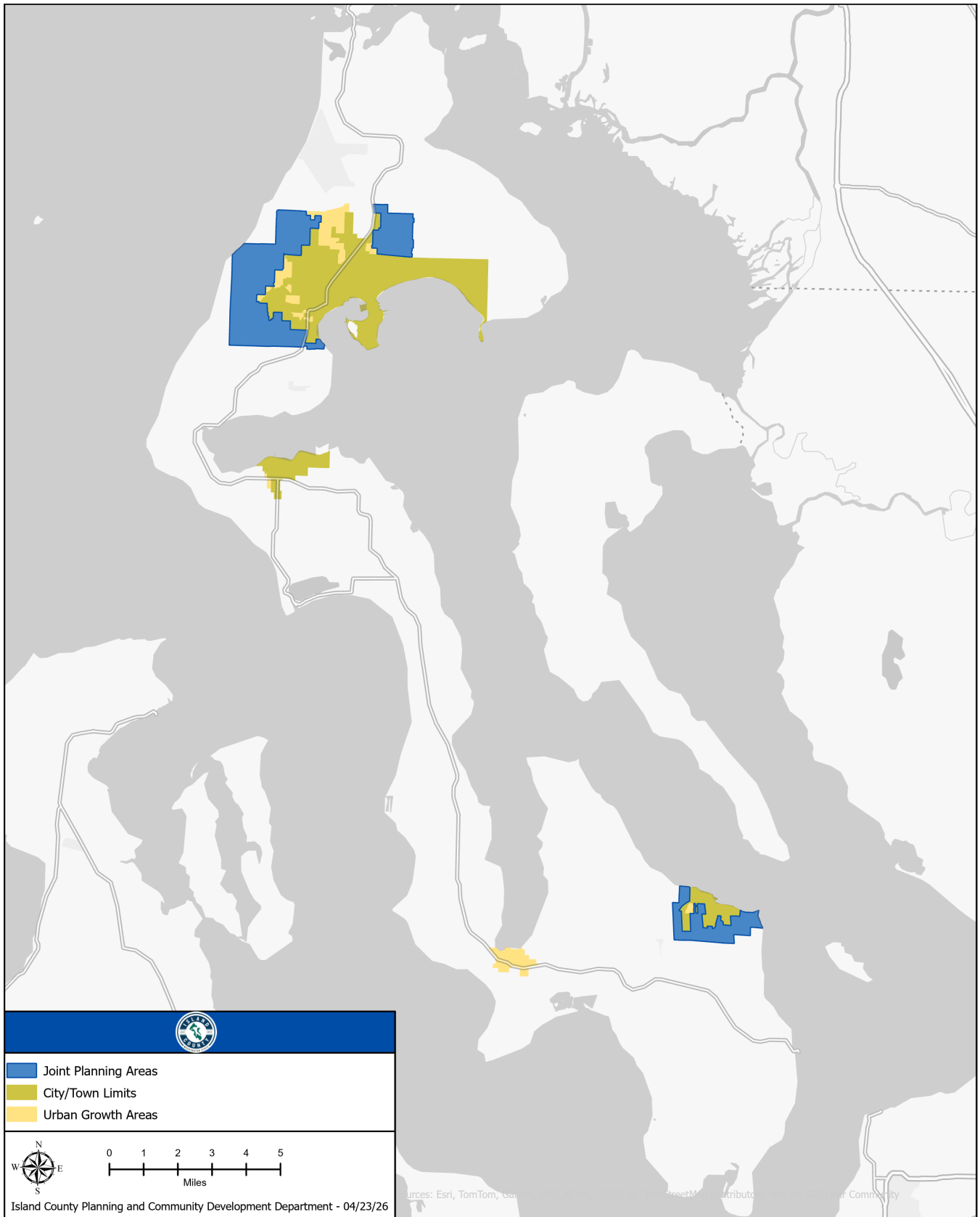
1.3.2.3 Home Occupation and Home Industry

Home Occupations and Home Industries are an essential piece of the rural economy of Island County. Development regulations will continue to permit such uses, subject to appropriate standards. The convenience and sometimes necessity of working from home can be ideal for those living in a rural area without large job centers. Home Occupations are intended to operate on a fairly small scale, incidental and secondary to the residential use and conducted on the parcel owned by the operator, either within the dwelling unit or in an accessory structure. Home Industries are on a slightly greater scale than Home Occupations but are still incidental and secondary to the residential use and require land use review.

1.3.2.4 Small-scale Recreation and Tourism

Small-scale recreation and tourist uses include things such as golf courses, equestrian centers, wineries, tasting rooms, parks, rural event centers, restaurants, farm stands and markets. These uses can provide opportunities for visitors to enjoy the benefits of the rural atmosphere while also providing an economic benefit to Island County's rural areas. Development regulations will continue to permit such uses, subject to appropriate standards.

MAP 1B Island County Urban Growth Areas and Joint Planning Areas



1.4 FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATIONS AND OVERLAYS

The County structures land use designations and policies around the following concepts.

A. Urban Elements

1. UGAs - municipal and non-municipal
2. Potential Expansion of UGAs - Joint Planning Areas & Future Growth Areas

B. Rural Elements

1. LAMIRDs
2. General Rural Designations

C. Resource Lands

D. Critical Areas

E. General Land Use Designations & Overlays

1. Aviation
2. Archaeologically Significant Areas
3. Parks
4. Public/Federal Lands

1.4.1 Urban Element Designations

Urban Development shall take place only within municipalities and UGAs; urban designations in Island County includes the municipal UGAs of Oak Harbor, Langley, and Coupeville, and the NMUGA of Freeland. The UGAs include areas and densities sufficient to permit urban growth projected through 2045 (see Land Capacity Analysis in Appendices).

1.4.2 Urban Growth Areas (UGAs)

In collaboration with the associated municipalities, Island County designates UGAs that include areas and densities sufficient to permit 20 years of projected future urban growth. The GMA requires that urban growth be directed to these areas, and that a UGA's size is based on population projections, land capacity, fiscal impacts, and the availability of public facilities to sufficiently serve those areas. The UGA must contain no more land than necessary to accommodate 20 years of population growth.

The Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) contain a coordinated, long range process for managing the County's UGAs and the lands surrounding them. The UGAs and associated overlays are discussed in detail in CPP Section 3.

1.4.2.1 Municipal Urban Growth Areas (UGAs)

The County is responsible for regulating land use and development activities within unincorporated portions of municipal UGAs; however, the County must coordinate with the associated municipality to ensure that any new uses authorized by a County permit or Development Regulations are consistent with the municipality's Planning Goals and Policies, as well as any applicable CPPs.

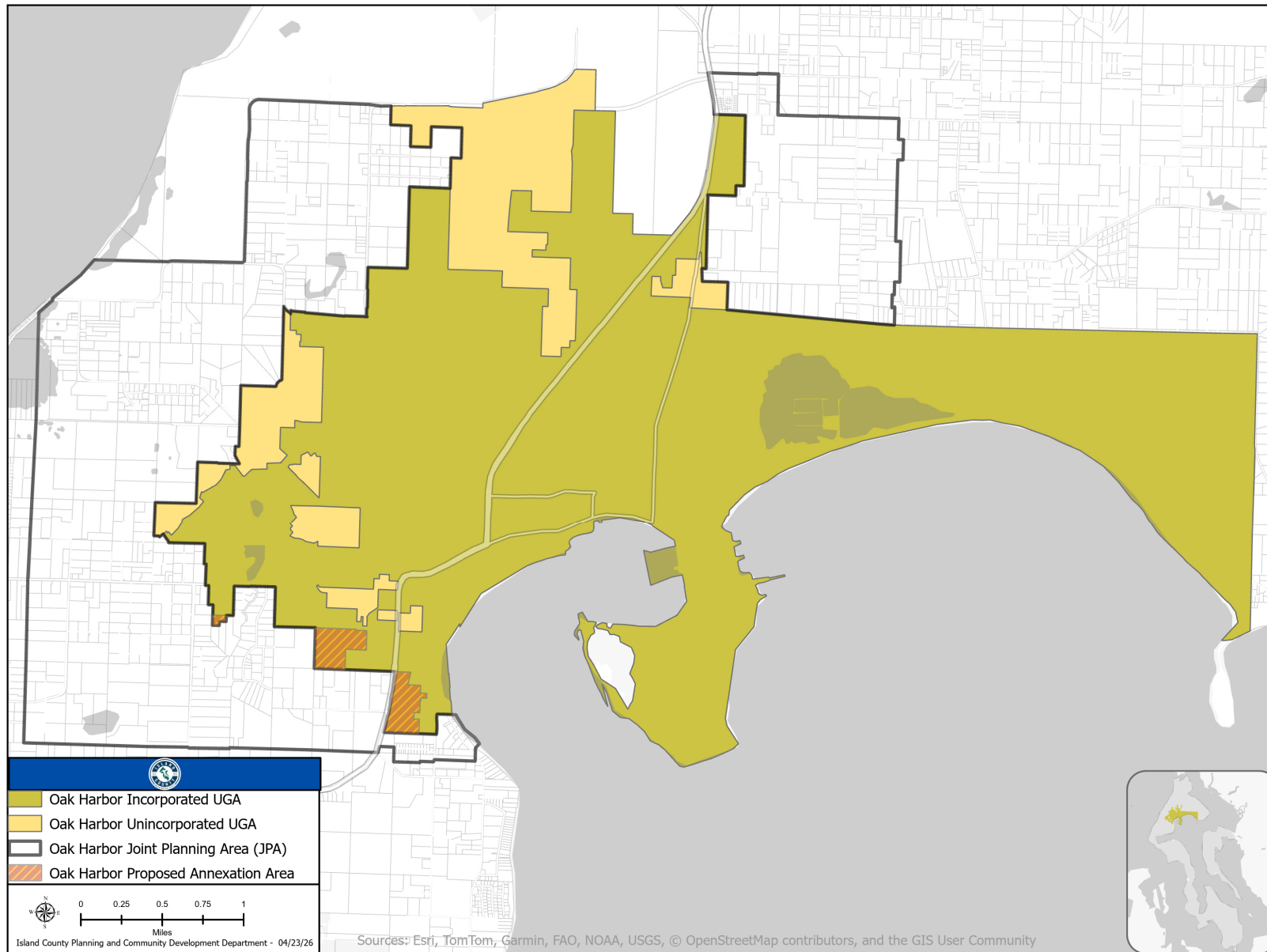
Each municipal UGA includes both the incorporated area plus adjacent, unincorporated areas. Land use designations, densities, and regulations for all types of development are in place for the unincorporated areas within the UGAs; the Oak Harbor, Langley, and Coupeville comprehensive plans contain proposed land uses and densities within these unincorporated areas. The CPPs ensure that the County and the associated municipality will jointly review development proposed within the unincorporated areas of municipal UGAs, with the County making the ultimate decision. The municipalities are exclusively responsible for regulating land use and development within the incorporated portions of their UGA.

The City of Oak Harbor is planning annexation of a portion of their UGA, as shown on Map 1C, at the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, but no additional UGA expansion at this time. Oak Harbor and Island County are working together to plan for future annexations, infrastructure, and growth in the Oak Harbor JPA.

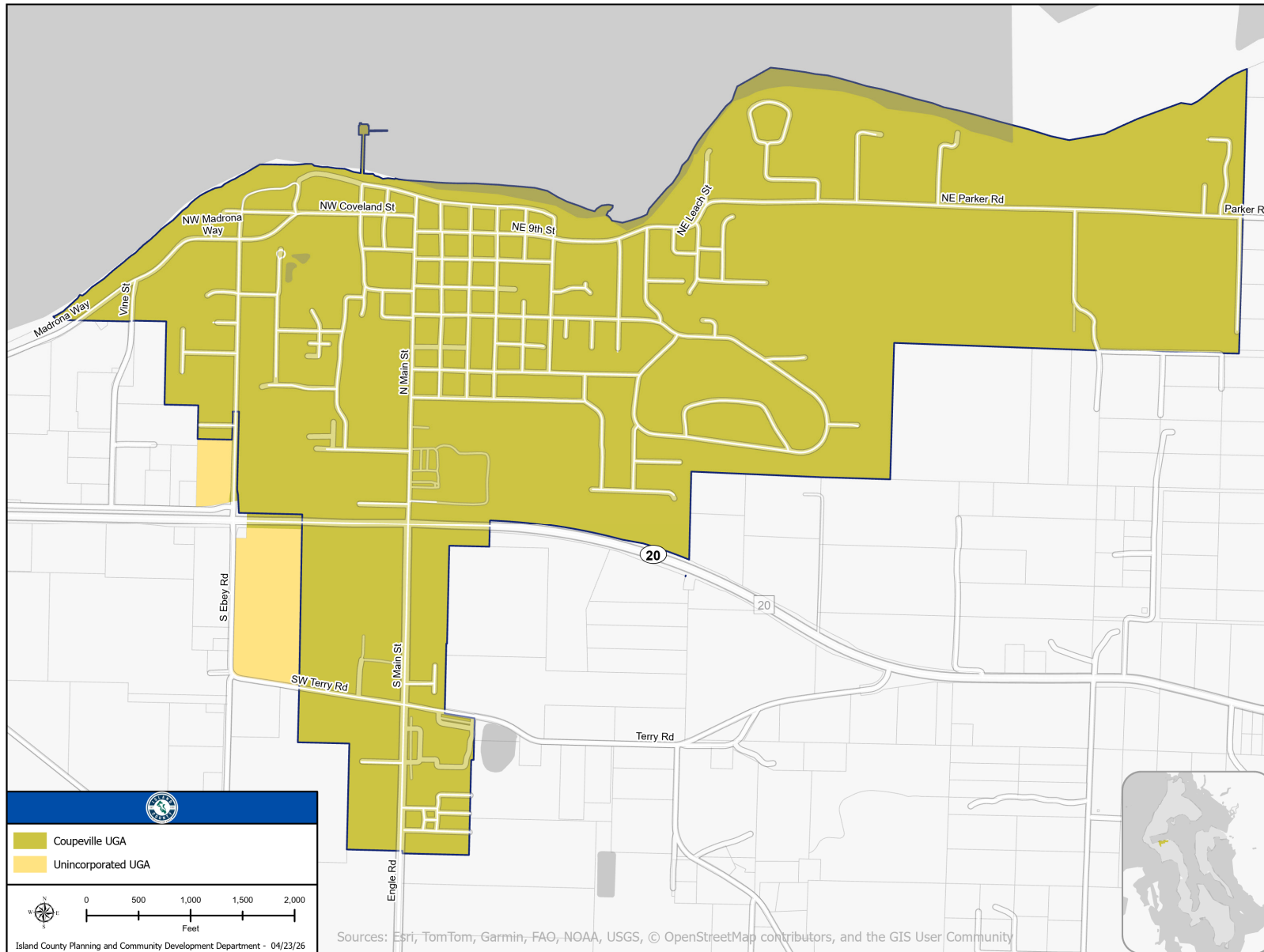
During the 2025 update, the Town of Coupeville requested the formation of an unincorporated UGA containing two parcels, a total of 26.27 acres, that are of special interest to the Town. One parcel is owned by the Coupeville School District and bringing said parcel into Town limits in a future annexation would allow all District owned properties to have the same development regulations during the permitting process. The other parcel is an open space parcel owned and maintained by the Town; bringing that parcel into a UGA would allow for the Town to facilitate property management and oversee future uses. The Town expects to annex these two properties soon after UGA formation.

The City of Langley did not propose any alteration to their UGA boundary during this periodic update, see section below regarding JPA for further information.

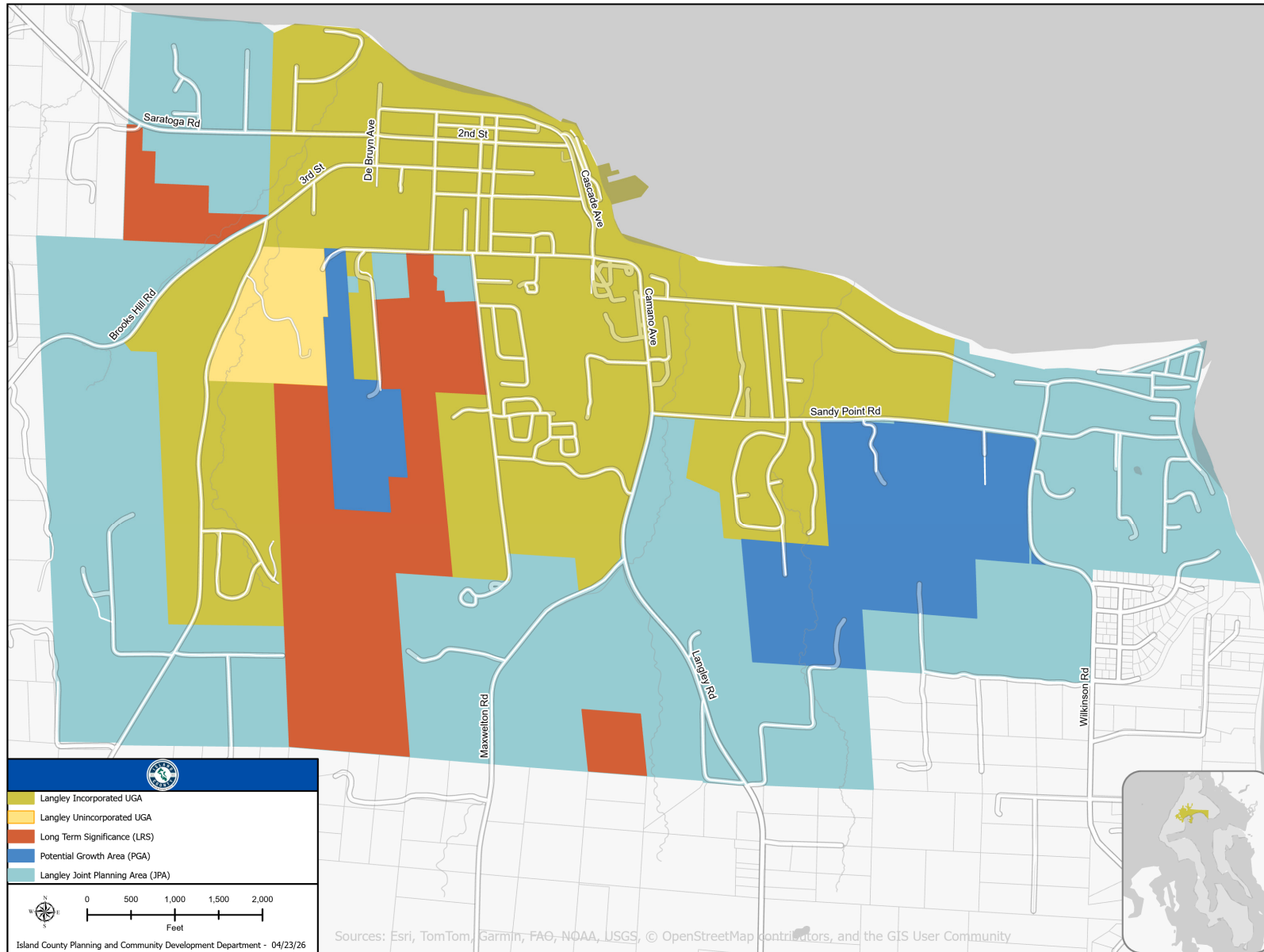
MAP 1C Oak Harbor UGA/JPA



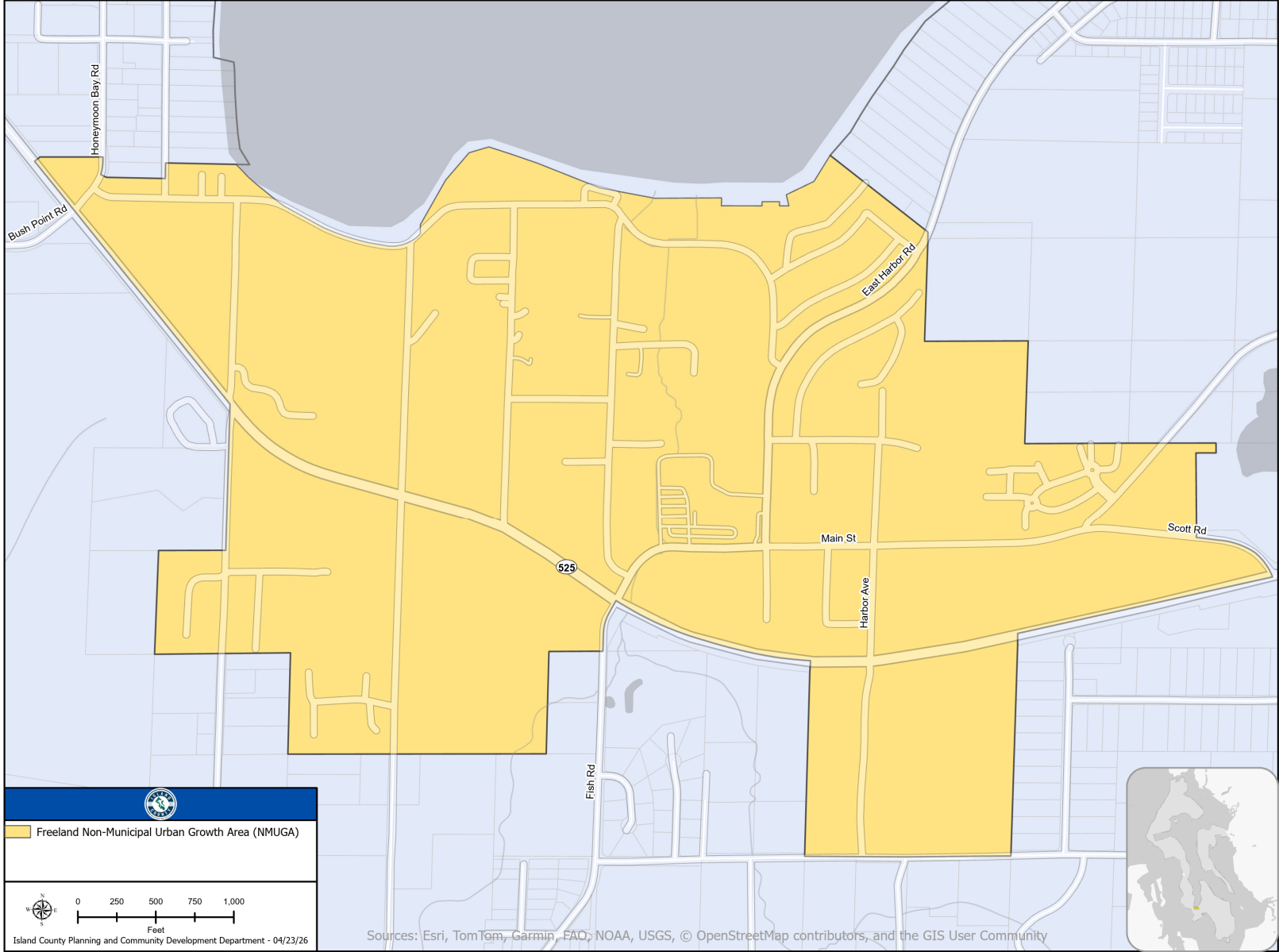
MAP 1D Coupeville UGA



MAP 1E Langley UGA/JPA



MAP 1F Freeland NMUGA



1.4.2.2 Freeland Non-Municipal Urban Growth Area (NMUGA)

Freeland is Island County's only NMUGA. It developed as an unincorporated community with a full range of land uses but lacks extensive urban infrastructure, specifically public sewer and urban stormwater systems. When these urban services are installed, Freeland will have the capacity to accommodate additional residents and employment. Freeland has therefore been assigned a NMUGA where new development characteristic of urban growth is encouraged to the extent that it can be supported by related infrastructure. Freeland's NMUGA operates similar to a municipal UGA but is administered by Island County.

Issues related to Freeland's NMUGA include determining how large its NMUGA should be, the logical boundaries for the NMUGA designation, appropriating an adequate mix of commercial, residential, and other uses, and the degree of autonomy Freeland has in making local land use decisions. The key issue in answering these questions is the availability of basic infrastructure, particularly sewer and stormwater systems. This is particularly true since many areas in Freeland do not percolate well and without a public sewer are undevelopable at urban densities. The County recognizes that a sewer system and systems to manage stormwater are needed if this area is to achieve the densities associated with the NMUGA. Freeland currently has a Public Water and Sewer District with the authority to annex and create Utility Local Improvement Districts (ULIDs). The Capital Facilities Plan outlines the next steps towards determining a wastewater solution for the Freeland NMUGA.

The Freeland NMUGA has land use designations specific to Freeland (see the 2016 Freeland Subarea Plan).

1.4.2.3 Potential FUTURE Expansion of Urban Growth Areas

1.4.2.3.1 Joint Planning Areas

Joint Planning Areas (JPAs) include land that may be suitable for future urban growth, as well as land that should be protected from development. JPAs are jointly designated by the county and municipalities to reserve areas which may be necessary for future urban growth and to protect land which has been identified as resource land of long-term commercial significance, land extensively constrained with critical areas, key entrance roads, and areas of historical significance. Broadly, such areas are intended to provide an opportunity for long-term planning beyond the normal twenty-year planning horizon. As outlined in the CPPs, a new process has been put into place for long term planning within the JPAs, to govern the potential expansion of the UGAs. The first step to this process, as outlined in the CPPs (3.2.1), involves applying the following overlay designations within the JPAs.

- Potential Growth Areas (PGA) - areas that are to be considered first for any potential future UGA expansions.
- Areas of Long Term Rural Significance (LRS) - areas which will be considered last for potential future UGA expansions.

Not all of the land within the JPA needs to be given a designation. The overlays will be utilized to prioritize potential future expansions of the UGA (assuming the criteria for an expansion are met). Areas without a JPA overlay will be considered after PGA areas and before LRS areas. The JPA designations may be reviewed periodically in the same manner as the UGAs. JPAs acknowledge that the UGAs may expand in the future and that development in these areas should reflect that possibility. The JPAs are reinforced through cooperative development of associated jurisdictions' comprehensive plan updates, CPPs, and Interlocal Agreements for joint planning processes and procedures.

Immediately outside of, and directly adjacent to, the municipal UGAs for Oak Harbor and Langley, the associated city and County jointly designated a JPA. Oak Harbor's JPA did not change during the 2025 update. The City of Langley did request changes to which lands within their JPA were designated as PGA and LRS during the 2025 update (see Map 1E for changes). The City states that the newly designated PGA lands are located in proximity to urban services that could easily be extended if that land is brought into the UGA. The City also expanded which lands are designated LRS, removing some parcels from the designation and adding additional parcels as shown in Map 1E.

The JPA around the Town of Coupeville was removed during the 2016 update; other land use review mechanisms, including the Ebey's National Historic Preserve joint planning process, are in place for those areas. The County and the Town have agreed to update the Interlocal Agreement governing joint planning process to include a provision to revisit the boundaries of the JPA at a future date and provide a process for reinstating the JPA if deemed necessary and beneficial.

1.5 RURAL ELEMENT DESIGNATIONS

The GMA requires that counties include a Rural Element that addresses lands that are not designated for urban growth, agriculture, forest, or mineral resources. Island County includes all Rural Element requirements and information within this subsection of the Land Use Element. The Rural Element promotes land uses that are compatible with rural character, preserve open space, agricultural opportunities, and recreational opportunities, and protect natural resources.

Island County values its rural character and seeks to foster land use patterns that provide rural landscapes that are compatible with the use of the land by wildlife; reduce inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land and farmland (land suitable for farming) into sprawling, low-density development; do not require the extension of urban governmental services; and are consistent with the protection of natural surface water flows and groundwater and surface water recharge and discharge areas.

Rural land uses consist of both dispersed and clustered residential developments, farms, wooded lots, and small and moderate-scale commercial and industrial uses that serve rural residents as their primary client. Rural landscapes encompass a full range of natural features including forests, streams and wetlands, pastures and cropland, prairies, shorelines, and other sensitive areas.

The rural element of Island County contains LAMIRDs and general rural land use designations. These include areas of rural development and lands that are not designated for urban growth, agriculture, forest, or mineral resources. Together these designations support a variety of rural densities, uses, essential public facilities, and rural governmental services needed to serve the permitted densities and uses.

1.5.1 Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Developments

LAMIRDs are allowed for the purpose of recognizing existing areas of more intensive or dense rural development, and to contain these areas from sprawling. The GMA requires the County adopt measures to minimize and contain existing areas or uses of more intensive rural development. Lands included in existing areas of more intensive rural development or uses associated with more intensive rural development shall not extend beyond the logical outer boundary of the existing area or use in order to prevent new patterns of low-density

sprawl. These existing areas are those that are clearly identifiable and contained, and where there is a logical boundary delineated predominantly by the built environment but that may also include limited undeveloped lands, within established boundaries.

WAC 365-196-425 recognizes three types of LAMIRDs that permit the infill, development, or redevelopment in isolated rural pockets already characterized by more intensive development outside of UGAs at a density greater than typical rural development. The three types of LAMIRDs are:

- Type 1 LAMIRDs consist of commercial, industrial, residential, or mixed-use areas.
- Type 2 LAMIRDs contain small-scale recreational or tourist uses, including commercial facilities to serve those recreational or tourist uses, that rely on a rural location and setting, but that do not include new residential development. Island County does not have any Type 2 LAMIRDs.
- Type 3 LAMIRDs contain isolated nonresidential uses, cottage industries, and small-scale businesses that provide job opportunities for rural residents.

Island County primarily has Type 1 LAMIRDs, split into three sub-categories of Mixed-Use, Residential, and Industrial LAMIRDs.

1.5.1.1 Type 1 LAMIRDs.

This designation is characterized as infill, development, or redevelopment of existing commercial, industrial, residential, or mixed-use areas, whether as shoreline development, villages, hamlets, rural activity centers, or crossroads. Any development or redevelopment other than an industrial area or use within a Type 1 LAMIRD must be principally designed to serve the rural population.

Any new development or redevelopment must be consistent with the pre-existing character of the area with respect to building size, scale, use, or intensity. Type 1 LAMIRDs must have been established as more densely developed areas as of July 1990, and they must include pre-GMA existing development. Type 1 LAMIRDs also must be bounded by a logical outer boundary that reflects the limits of the pre-existing development.

Zoning Districts within the Type 1 LAMIRDs include:

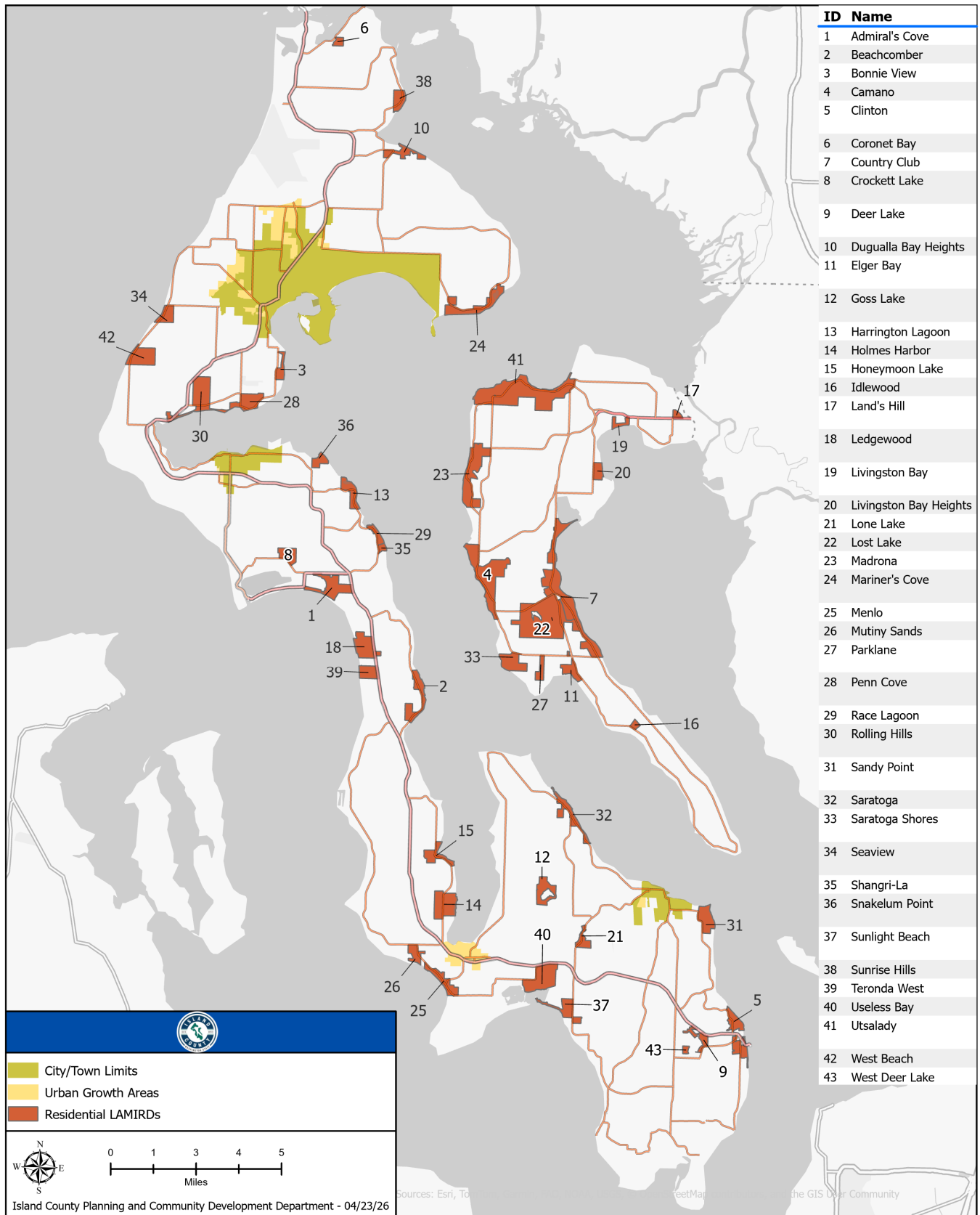
- Rural Residential
- Rural Center (Mixed-Use)
- Rural Village (Mixed-Use)
- Camano Gateway Village (Mixed-Use)

1.5.1.2 Type 3 LAMIRDs.

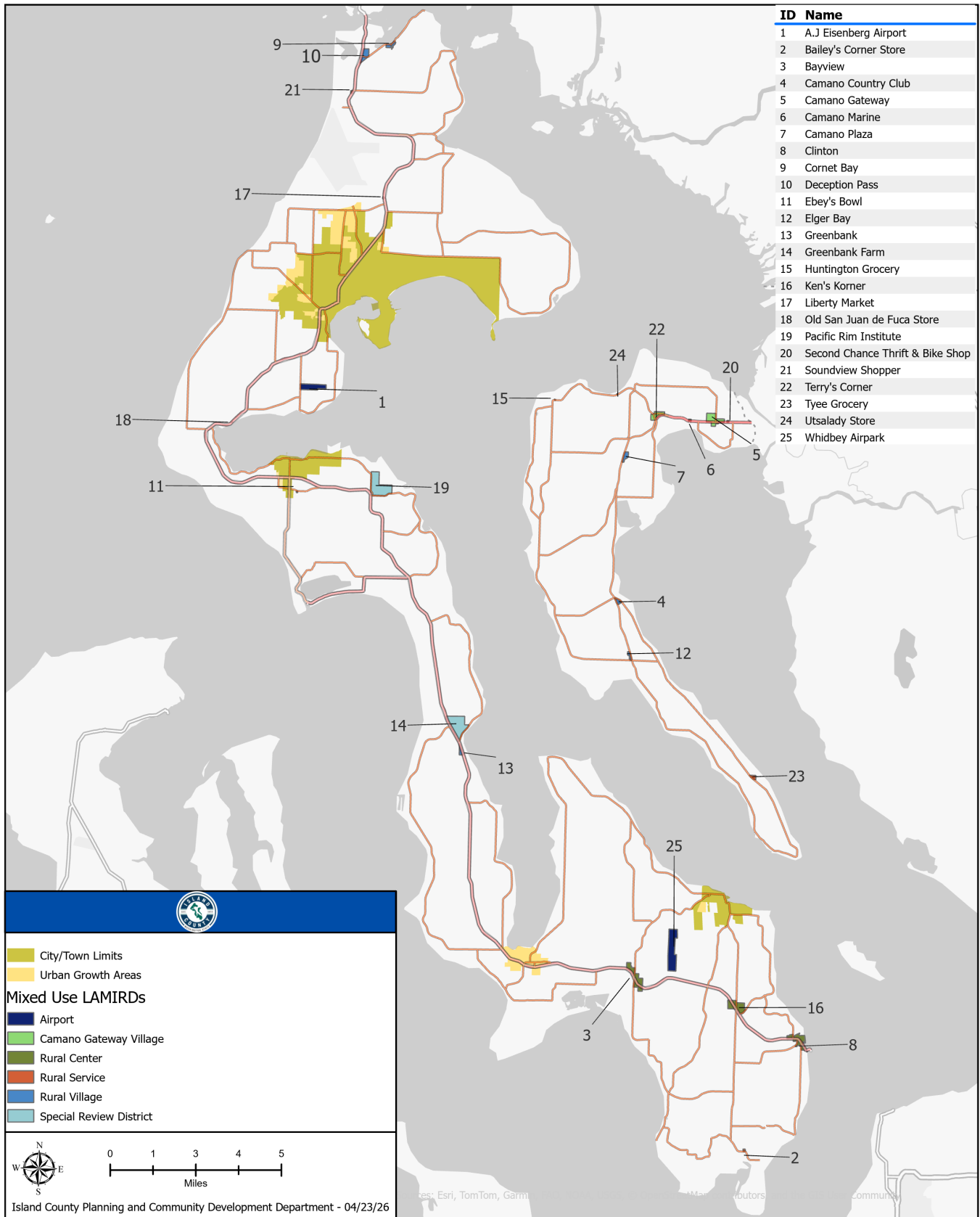
These LAMIRDs are meant for the intensification of, or new development of, lots for isolated nonresidential uses, isolated cottage industries, and isolated small-scale businesses. Residential development is prohibited. Type 3 LAMIRDs are not designed to principally serve the rural population but should provide job opportunities for rural residents. Expansion or new development must conform with the rural character of the area. Public services and public facilities shall be limited to those necessary to serve the isolated use and shall be provided in a manner that does not permit low-density sprawl.

Zoning Districts within the Type 3 LAMIRDs include: Rural Service

MAP 1G Residential LAMIRDs



MAP 1H Mixed-Use LAMIRDS



1.5.2 Clinton

Although Clinton is presently comprised of both a Rural Residential LAMIRD and a Mixed-Use LAMIRD, it is possible that the County may change the designation of the area to a NMUGA at some point in the future. Clinton, similar to Freeland, developed as an unincorporated community, generally with a full range of land uses. As such, the area is a logical choice for further growth and to accommodate some of the county's projected population and employment for the county as a whole. During this comprehensive plan update, the County developed a Clinton Subarea Plan to study the Clinton Residential and Rural Center LAMIRDs. More information can be found in Clinton Subarea Plan.

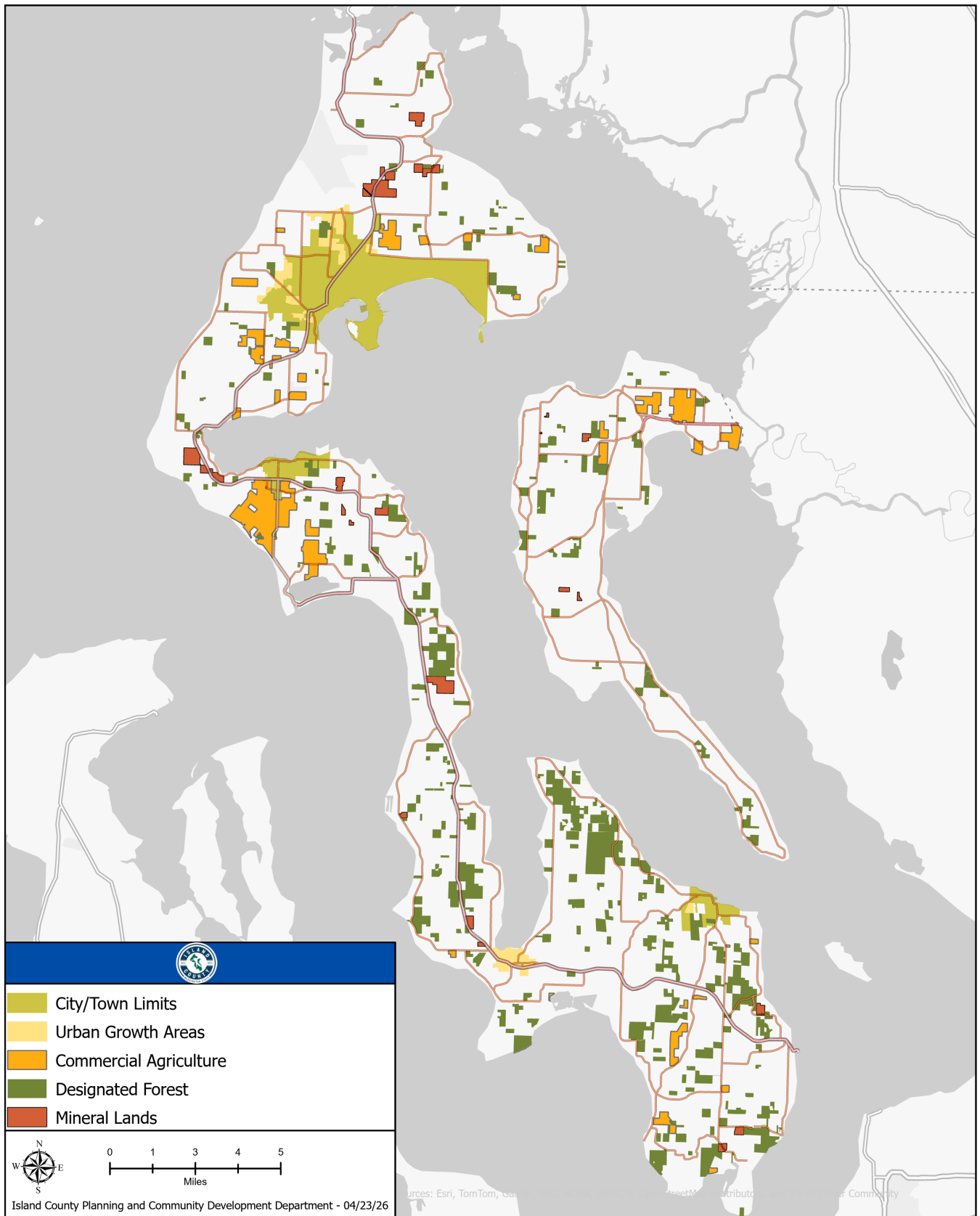
1.5.3 Special Review Districts

Special Review Districts are areas that need special consideration for future development, in the form of a master plan. The Special Review District classification is applied to large properties (at least 150 acres in size) that are owned by a single public agency or a non-profit organization. These areas are typically designated as Special Review Districts because the site is unique or the use characteristics make it hard to classify. Special Review Districts are often used to establish special standards to protect lands and structures that have historical, archaeological, or environmental significance while allowing a unique combination of uses that enhance, conserve, or highlight these features of significance. Island County's three existing Special Review Districts are the Pacific Rim Institute, the Keystone Preserve, and Greenbank Farm (Port Tract).

1.6 RURAL AREAS

Rural lands are lands located outside of UGAs, and lands designated as agricultural, forest, or mineral resource lands. Rural development, forestry, and agriculture are generally permitted in Island County's rural areas. The GMA allows counties to use clustering, density transfer, design guidelines, conservation easements, and other innovative techniques to achieve a variety of rural densities and uses that are not characterized by urban growth and consistent with rural character.

MAP 1 | Commercial Agriculture, designated Forest, and Mineral Lands



1.7 RESOURCE LANDS

The resource lands of Island County are defined by the Commercial Agriculture land use designation and the Mineral Lands Overlay. Minerals include sand, gravel, and valuable metallic substances.

Island County designates mineral resource lands in accordance with RCW 36.70A.131 and considers new information, including data available from the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the United States Geological Survey (USGS), relating to mineral resource deposits.

1.8 CRITICAL AREAS

Under the GMA, the County is required to adopt and implement regulations that protect the functions and values of critical areas. Critical areas include the following areas and ecosystems: (a) Wetlands; (b) areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water; (c) Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas; (d) frequently flooded areas; and (e) geologically hazardous areas [RCW 36.70A.030(12)].

Island County's Critical Areas maps, provide generalized locations of critical areas based on studies conducted by local, state, and federal agencies. The County is ultimately responsible for updating and maintaining the maps on a regular basis, as additional information becomes available through studies and subsequent determinations. However, precisely accurate critical area boundaries will be determined on a site-by-site basis.

Critical areas are protected through land use designations and use standards in Island County Code Chapters 17.02B, Critical Areas Regulations, and 17.05A, Shoreline Master Program (for more information see the Natural Resources Element).

1.9 GENERAL LAND USE DESIGNATIONS AND OVERLAYS

1.9.1 Aviation

Airports and related support facilities are an important part of the transportation network serving uses in Island County. Island County aviation facilities represent a significant capital investment and provide economic benefits. However, airports can cause negative impacts on surrounding uses. Likewise, incompatible surrounding uses may negatively impact airport operations. As such, airport expansion and surrounding land development have compatibility as their goal (RCW 36.70.547). Compatibility measures for airports and surrounding uses are instituted depending upon the degree and nature of potential conflict between the airport and surrounding uses. The aim behind compatibility measures is to mitigate adverse noise and safety issues, including prohibiting the siting of incompatible uses adjacent to general aviation airports and military bases.

There are several classifications of airports and aviation facilities recognized by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The ones currently sited in Island County include private, limited, commercial, and military. Private and limited facilities are generally intended for private use, while commercial facilities are privately owned but intended for general use by the public. They include DeLaurentis Airport, Whidbey Airpark, and Camano Island Airfield. Military airports in the County are discussed in more detail below.

1.9.2 Military Airfields

Military airfields, also referred to as airports, in the County include the Naval Air Station Whidbey Island (NASWI) and the Naval Outlying Landing Field Coupeville (OLF), which vary in size and use. These airports are owned or operated by the Federal Government, and general use by the public is prohibited unless there is an emergency, or specific authorization is granted. The high sound levels generated by aircraft using these airports and the frequency of use requires unique consideration for implementation of compatibility measures.

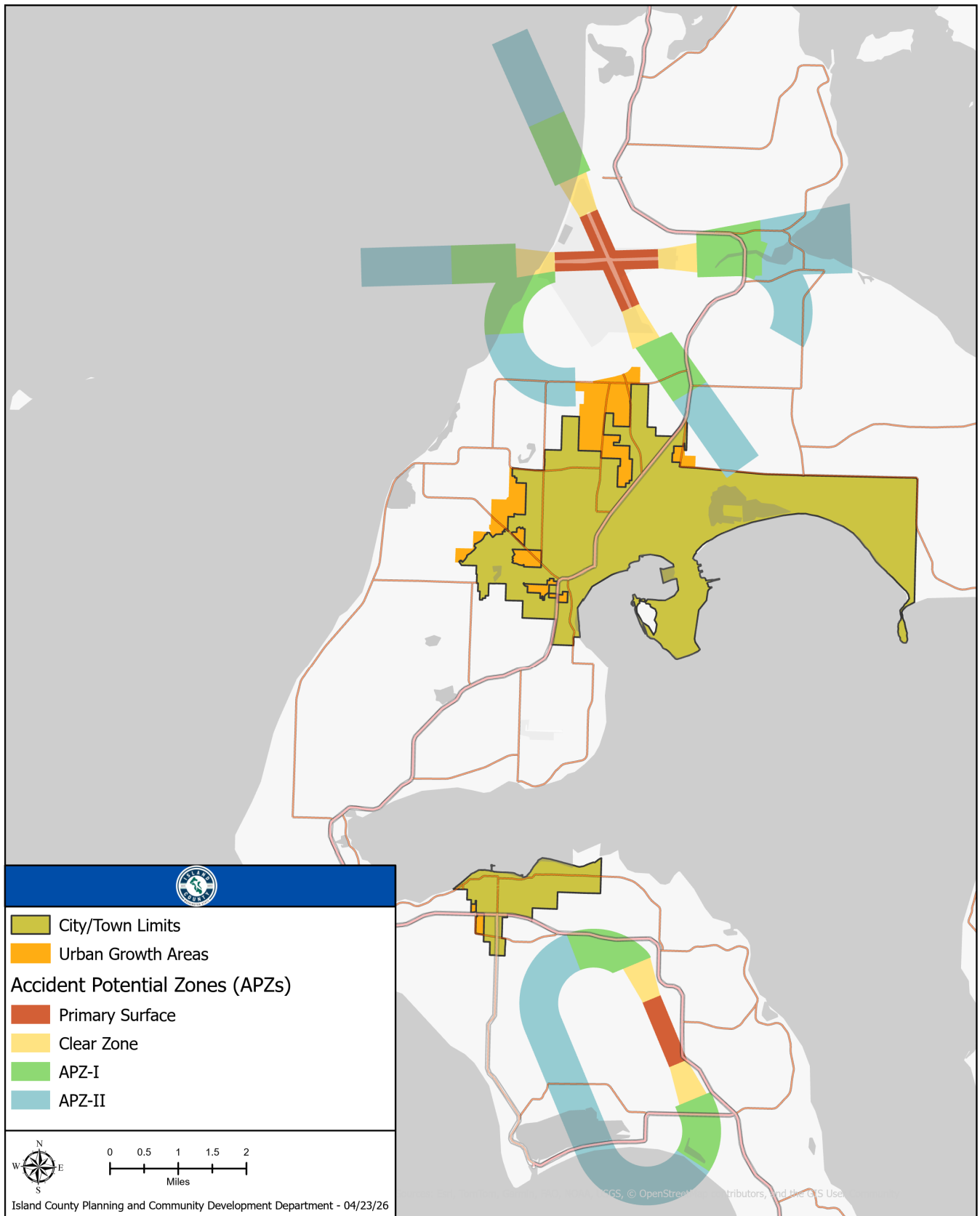
NASWI, including OLF, represents the dominant economic force in Island County. They are a strategically located national asset and constitute a significant capital investment in our region by the federal government. The closure of these facilities would result in extreme population and economic loss for the county. As such, the County's land use decisions support the retention and future use of these facilities. Uses incompatible with the current and future projected missions of the base shall not be sited adjacent to the NASWI and the OLF (RCW 36.70A.530).

Designated Accident Potential Zones (APZs) surround both military and other airports to support public health, safety, and welfare, as well as continued military operation. Island County ensures that development in APZs is at the lowest possible density consistent with the underlying land use designation.

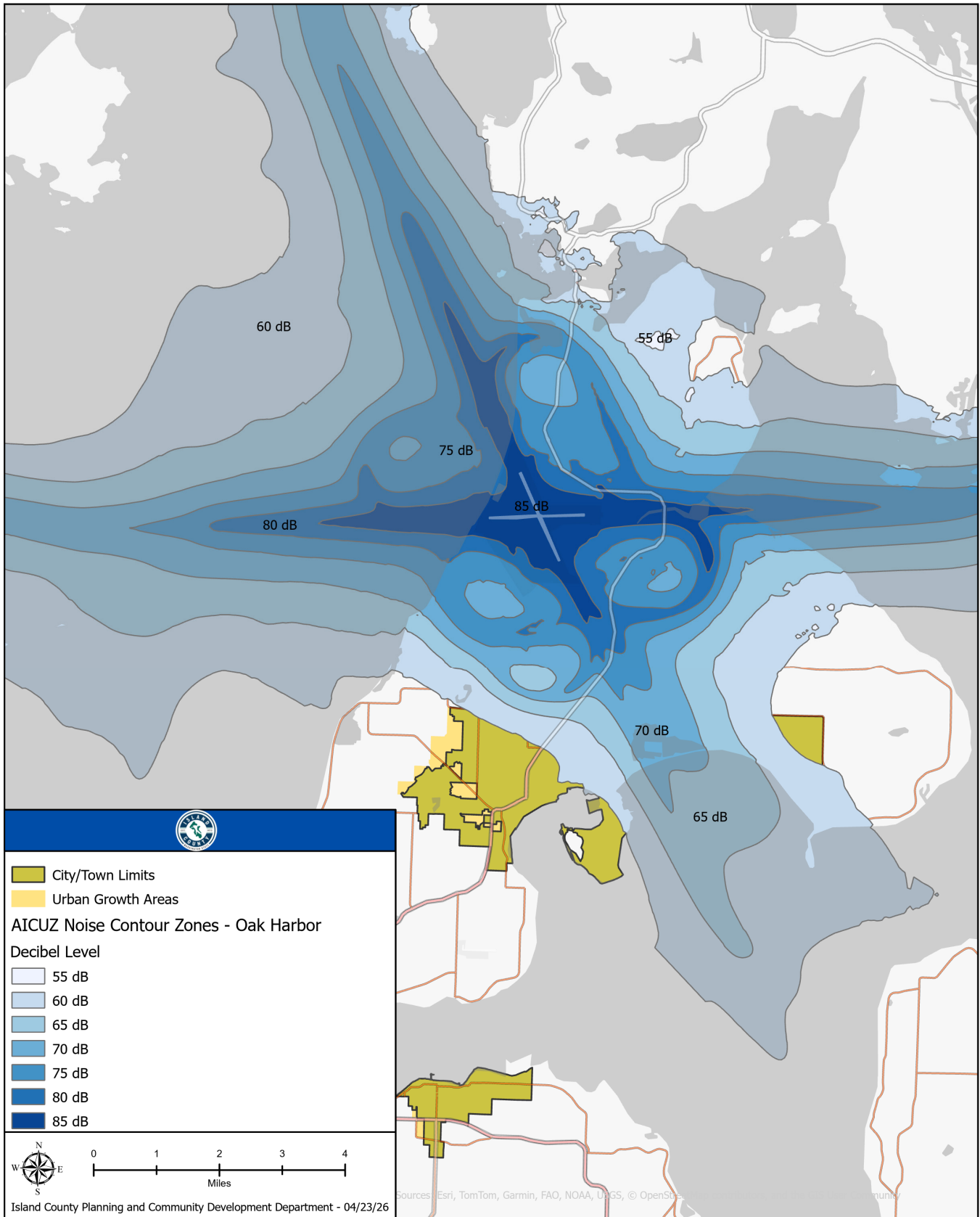
In 2011, an Air Installations Compatible Use Zones (AICUZ) Program was initiated. Under the program, a comprehensive study was prepared for military air installations to identify existing and compatible land use problem areas and to formulate courses of action to promote compatible development near the air facilities. The AICUZ study generally contains aircraft noise contour maps, Accident Potential Zone (APZ) designations, and recommended land use matrices for land areas within those noise zones and/or APZs. In 2021, NASWI revisited the AICUZ program and the newest AICUZ and APZ maps will now be utilized for the implementation of these regulations.

Map 1J identifies the military airport APZs, while Maps 1K and 1L identify Island County aircraft noise contours in the Oak Harbor and Coupeville area respectively.

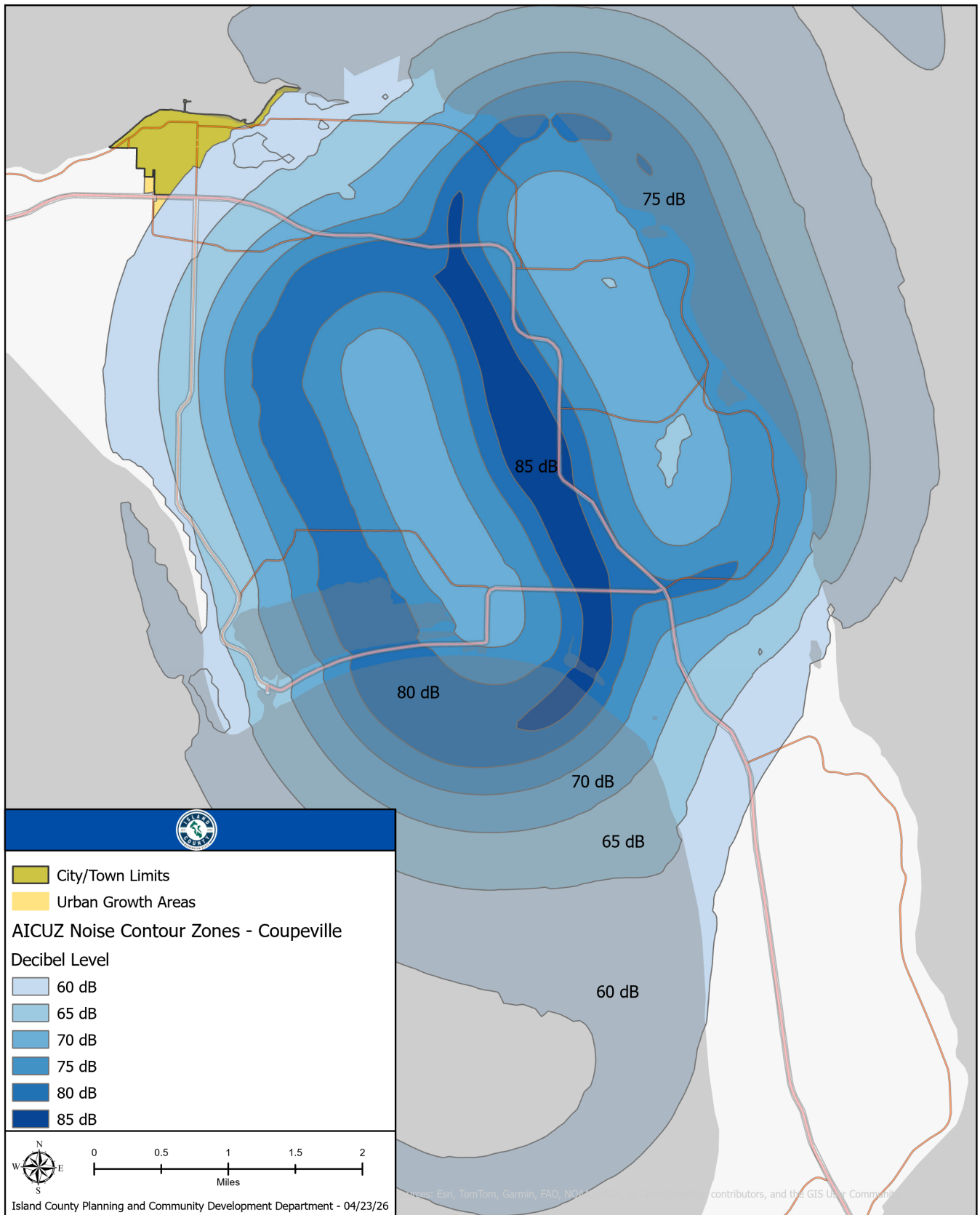
MAP 1J APZs



MAP 1K AICUZ Noise Contours Ault Field



MAP 1L AICUZ Noise Contours Outlying Field Coupeville



1.9.3 Parks

The Parks land use designation provides recreation opportunities and conserves critical areas and open spaces. Uses and activities allowed in the Parks designation are intended to provide services and recreation opportunities for local residents as well as visitors to the County while preserving, promoting or enhancing natural lands, open spaces and critical areas. A complete inventory of parks can be found in the Parks and Recreation Element.

1.9.4 Public/Federal Lands

Roughly 9.6 percent of Island County is public lands held by the Federal, State, or local government. The majority of the public lands are designated forests which provide significant recreational opportunities and conservation of wildlife habitat. In addition to parks operated by Washington State Parks, there are fishing and shellfish harvest areas managed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and forest lands and school trust lands managed by DNR.

Two units of the Federal government are responsible for management of lands in the County. NASWI has four sites in the County, Ault Field and the Seaplane Base are located in north Whidbey Island while OLF Coupeville and Lake Hancock are located in central Whidbey Island. Additionally, certain public properties within Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve are managed by the National Park Service.

1.9.5 Master Planned Resorts

Under RCW 36.70A.360 and 362 Island County may permit master planned resorts, which may constitute urban growth outside of UGAs. Island County's Master Planned Resorts are developed as significantly self-contained and integrated development. They may include visitor accommodations and recreational facilities within the boundaries of the master plan. While generally large enough to include conference facilities or commercial activities to support the resort, the uses are integrated into a logical plan set in a relatively natural and rural landscape. Utilities and services provided on-site are limited to those necessary for meeting the needs of the resort, and the cost of services provided by outside providers must be borne solely by the resort, rather than the public.

Table 1-1 Designation Criteria

Criteria	Associated Zones
Rural Lands	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UGAs or LAMIRDs; and • Areas in which open space, the natural landscape, and vegetation predominate over the built environment; and • Areas which are compatible with land used by wildlife; and • Areas which reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development; and • Areas which are consistent with the protection of natural surface water flows and groundwater and surface water recharge areas; or • Areas which include lands having both long term commercial significance for production of agricultural products or timber; or • Those lands in public ownership that are dedicated or reserved primarily for public use or enjoyment for recreation, but can also serve as scenic amenities, natural resource lands, or for the protection of the environmentally sensitive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural • Rural Forest • Rural Agriculture • Parks • Commercial Agriculture

Table 1-2 Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Development (LAMIRD) Designations

Designation Criteria	Associated Zones
Residential LAMIRDs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of more intensive rural development are designated pursuant to the guidelines established in RCW 36.70A.070 for establishing logical outer boundaries for existing areas of more intensive rural development. • Areas which provide for the infill, development, or redevelopment of existing residential areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Residential
Mixed-Use LAMIRDs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed use areas or more intensive rural development are designated pursuant to the guidelines established in RCW 36.70A.070 for establishing logical outer boundaries for existing areas of more intensive rural development. • Areas in which existing commercial activities are associated with the provision of daily convenience goods and services for rural area populations. • Areas which provide commercial, light manufacturing, and higher density residential needs of the rural population wherein development exist in an attractive setting that is pedestrian oriented and served by public transit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Center • Camano Gateway Village • Rural Village • Rural Service

Designation Criteria	Associated Zones
Aviation	
Areas around existing commercial airports and adjacent to existing non- residential uses that are suitable for increased levels of light industrial and manufacturing development and shall be designated pursuant to the guidelines established in RCW 36.70A.070 for establishing logical outer boundaries for existing LAMIRDs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Airport
Light Manufacturing	
Areas with existing light industry and manufacturing, assembling, fabrication, storage, wholesaling, distribution, auto repair/salvage, and related activities which are clustered in a complex that provides adequate buffering and screening from surrounding land uses and shall be designated pursuant to the guidelines established in RCW 36.70A.070 for establishing logical outer boundaries for existing LAMIRDs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light Manufacturing
Special Review District	
Areas defined during the comprehensive planning process that require special consideration for future development which a master plan allows.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pacific Rim Institute • Greenbank Farm (Port Tract) • Keystone Preserve

Table 1-3 Urban Land Use Designations

Designation Criteria	Associated Zones
Unincorporated Municipal UGA	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas which are in the unincorporated portions of municipal Urban Growth Areas (UGAs). • These areas are intended to provide for zoning designations that do not impede the future intensification of development in the Urban Holding areas when urban infrastructure is available to serve these areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oak Harbor - Residential • Oak Harbor - Industrial • Oak Harbor - Highway Service Commercial • Oak Harbor - Planned Business Park • Oak Harbor - Planned Industrial Park • Urban Growth Area – Langley
Urban Areas	
<p>Areas within Non-Municipal UGAs and the incorporated portions of municipal Urban Growth Areas (UGA), which are designated pursuant to RCW 36.70A.110. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas where urban growth will be encouraged and supported with urban levels of service; and • Areas that make intensive use of land for the location of buildings, structure and impervious surfaces to the degree that it is incompatible with agriculture, forestry and the extraction of mineral resources; and • Designations of these areas are under the jurisdiction of separate comprehensive plans or sub-areas plans, all respective zoning associated with these areas are designated in those respective documents and development regulations. 	<p>No associated zones; the following is a list of the areas where this land use designation applies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Oak Harbor • City of Langley • Town of Coupeville • Freeland NMUGA

Table 1-4 Other Land Use Designations

Designation Criteria	Associated Zones
Federal	
Lands under ownership of the federal Government and it's departments, such as the Department of Defense.	No associated zones; the following is a list of areas where this Land Use Designation applies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ault Field • Naval Outlying Field Coupeville • Lake Hancock • Seaplane Base
Water Areas	
Areas with lots historically established and existing entirely waterward of the Ordinary high Watermark (OHWM).	Water

Table 1-5 Critical Areas Overlay Designations

Definition	Designation Criteria
Aquifer Recharge Areas	
Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas are those areas that have been designated as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Sole Source Aquifer under the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act; or • Ground Water Management Areas per Chapters 90.44, 90.48, and 90.54 RCW, and Chapters 173 100 and 173 200 WAC. 	All of Island County is comprised of High, Medium, or Low Recharge Susceptibility areas
Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas Overlay	
Land management for maintaining species in suitable habitats within their natural geographic distribution so that isolated subpopulations are not created.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas with which species listed as endangered, threatened, and sensitive by federal or state government have a primary association. • Streams. • Commercial and recreational shellfish beds. • Kelp and eelgrass beds. • Herring and smelt spawning areas. • State natural area preserves and natural resource conservation areas. • In addition, habitats and species of local importance may be nominated and designated.
Frequently Flooded Areas	
Lands in the floodplain subject to a one percent or greater chance of flooding in any given year (also known as 100-year floodplains); these areas include, but are not limited to, streams, lakes, coastal areas, and wetlands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100-year floodplains as listed and mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the National Flood Insurance Program.

Definition	Designation Criteria
Geologically Hazardous Areas (Steep/Unstable Slopes) Overlay	
Areas not suited to siting of commercial, residential, or industrial development consistent with public health or safety concerns due to their susceptibility to sliding or other slope failures, erosion, or other geological events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas indicated within the Washington Department of Ecology’s Coastal Zone Atlas of Island County, dated April, 1979 as having recent or historical slide activity and/or indicative of unstable slope conditions. • Areas with slopes 40% or greater and with a vertical elevation change of at least ten feet, except areas of consolidated rock.

Table 1-6 Airport Aviation Safety Land Use Overlay Designations

Definition	Designation Criteria
Aircraft Noise Contours	
The Noise Contours represent the high aircraft noise zone areas of Island County where special land use controls are necessary to assure public health, welfare and safety.	The designated Island County Aircraft Noise Contours overlays are shown in Map 1S.
Aircraft Accident Potential Zones (APZ)	
The primary purpose of the Aircraft Accident Potential Zone Overlay is to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare by minimizing the risk to development in the immediate vicinity of aircraft paths of arrival and departure associated with NASWI Ault Field and OLF.	The designated Accident Potential Zone Overlay associated with NASWI, are shown in Map 1R

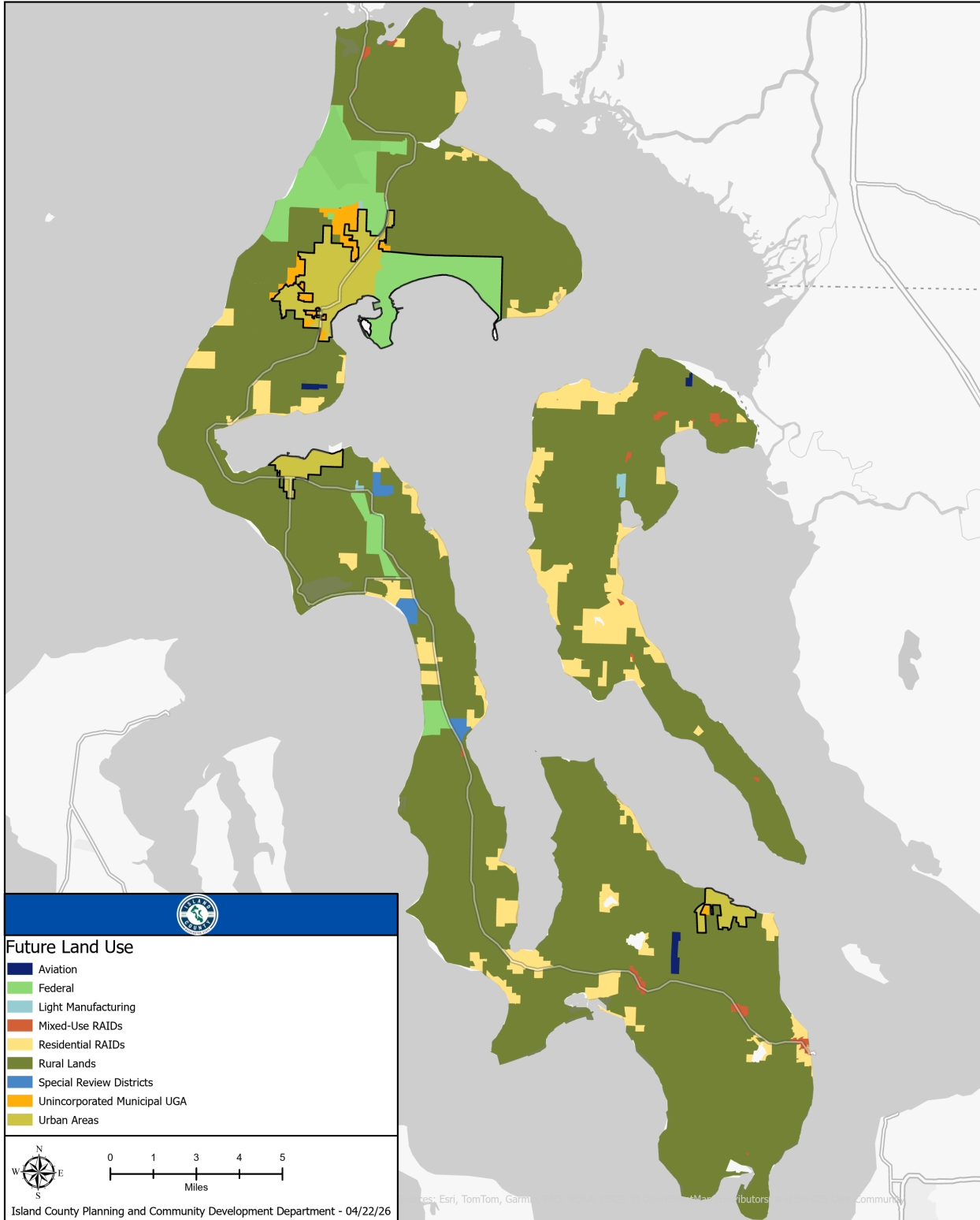
Table 1-7 Other Overlays

Definition	Designation Criteria
Mineral Lands Overlay	
Those lands primarily devoted to the extraction of minerals or that have a known potential for long term commercial extraction of minerals. Minerals are defined as sand, gravel, and valuable metallic substances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mineral Lands Overlay shall contain the existing mineral operations which have final use and site plan approval, conditional use permits, or certificates of zoning compliance. • Map E shows existing areas of surficial sand and gravel deposits. • There are no known deposits of valuable metallic minerals in Island County.

1.10 FUTURE LAND USE MAP

The following map indicates the locations identified for each of the above Land Use Designations. 11x17 version of this map is available in the Appendix.

MAP 1M Future Land Use Maps



1.11 GOALS AND POLICIES

Goal 1 Achieve a staged and orderly development pattern that accommodates growth, fosters a high quality living environment, and protects rural character, natural resources, and historic properties.

LU 1.1 Accommodate projected population and employment growth in a manner that protects the established character of neighborhoods and promotes equity regardless of geography and/or socio economic status.

LU 1.2 Encourage infill of subdivided lands and the logical expansion of urban areas.

LU 1.3 Ensure residential developments are planned to minimize impacts upon, and public expenditures for, both transportation and public facilities and services.

LU 1.4 Evaluate land use actions and decisions for their impact on equal access to opportunities and resources for all residents, regardless of identity, community, or socio-economic circumstances.

LU 1.5 Utilize demonstration projects to create opportunities to evaluate the impact of land use actions and decisions on equal access to housing and employment for all residents. A Request for Proposal (RFP) process will be used to select qualified developers and/or providers for demonstration projects.

LU 1.6 Before the 2035 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, complete a Subarea Plan for the Camano Gateway.

LU 1.7 Allow transitional housing or permanent supportive housing in any zone where residential dwelling units or overnight lodging is allowed, provided that such facilities meet all Health, Building, Zoning code, and safety standards. Reasonable occupancy, spacing, and intensity of use requirements may be imposed on permanent supportive housing, transitional housing, emergency housing, and emergency shelters to protect public health and safety.

Goal 2 Balance community health, safety, and conservation of natural and community resources.

LU 2.1 The County will coordinate with internal, local, state, federal, and tribal departments and agencies to ensure that there is consistency with land use planning and decision making.

LU 2.2 The County will work to preserve existing affordable housing stock, including but not limiting to, manufactured and mobile homes.

LU 2.3 Educate, promote, and incentivize the use of community septic systems within existing housing stock.

LU 2.4 Use Best Available Science to regulate development in a manner that balances protection of property rights and human health and safety with protection of critical area functions and values.

Goal 3 Direct growth to municipalities and urban growth areas (UGAs) where growth is economically viable, served by transportation, and where adequate municipal facilities and services exist or can be provided efficiently and consistently with environmental and other goals.

LU 3.1 Increase the proportion of growth in UGAs and NMUGAs where adequate public facilities or services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.

LU 3.2 Direct urban development first to areas within municipal boundaries, and then toward the unincorporated portion of municipal UGA.

LU 3.3 Non-urban development in the UGA should only be allowed if it will be compatible with future urban development.

LU 3.4 Encourage annexation of unincorporated UGA lands surrounded by municipal lands.

LU 3.5 Prohibit non-contiguous annexation within the UGA, except where conserved lands or critical areas are counted as open space.

LU 3.6 Minimize harmful fiscal and environmental impacts of growth through urban development patterns.

LU 3.7 Use the edges of major features, such as roads and drainageways, to help provide a clear and natural boundary between urban and rural areas.

LU 3.8 Use interlocal agreements (ILAs) as a method to guide development in the unincorporated UGAs located around municipalities.

LU 3.8.1 Review ILAs every five years starting in 2026 and make updates as necessary to guide development in the unincorporated portions of municipal UGAs.

LU 3.9 Coordinate with municipalities to provide open space corridors adjacent to urban areas with intentional habitat interconnectivity for wildlife.

LU 3.10 New urban services and facilities (including, but not limited to storm and sanitary sewer systems, domestic water systems, street cleaning services, fire and police protection services, public transit services, and other public utilities associated with urban areas as defined in RCW 36.70A.030(43)) shall be limited to UGAs, unless service extension is necessary to respond to a documented public health hazard caused by existing development which cannot otherwise reasonably be remedied.

LU 3.11 The County shall work to preserve existing affordable housing stock within UGAs, including but not limiting to manufactured and mobile homes, and partner with municipalities to achieve this policy.

LU 3.12 New development (including subdivisions, site plan approvals, and other development) within UGAs shall be served by public sewer and water.

LU 3.12.1 Provide flexibility within the NMUGAs for community sewage and water service solutions meeting health and safety standards.

Goal 4

Utilize joint Planning Areas (JPAs) to provide long term planning opportunities beyond the 20 year planning horizon by reserving areas which may be necessary for future urban growth and for protection of areas of long term rural significance.

LU 4.1 Encourage municipalities to designate JPA overlays that are appropriate for future UGA expansions, including areas that are appropriate for future development at urban densities, as well as Potential Growth Area (PGA), and Long Term Rural Significance (LRS) overlays.

LU 4.2 Cities, Towns and the County shall jointly develop implementation strategies for the Open Space Corridors identified within JPAs in the Natural Resources Element of the County Comprehensive Plan.

LU 4.3 Amendment of the JPA boundaries, overlays, and joint planning processes should be coordinated between the County and associated municipalities as outlined in the CPPs.

LU 4.4 Land development decisions in Joint Planning Areas shall not preclude the future expansion of UGAs.

LU 4.5 Discourage siting of public facilities within a JPA unless their function or service area is best served by a location outside of a UGA.

Goal 5 Provide for the infill, development, or redevelopment of commercial, industrial, residential, or mixed-use LAMIRDs, pursuant to RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d).

LU 5.1 In all LAMIRDs, use a proactive planning approach for access management onto State Highways consistent with Island County Code and Washington State Department of Transportation regulations, including cross connectivity, internal circulation systems, and consolidation of access points.

LU 5.2 Development within Light Manufacturing and Airport LAMIRDs shall avoid environmental and community impact where feasible. Developers must mitigate potential negative effects, such as air, light, noise, and water pollution, and traffic congestion.

LU 5.3 Cluster structures within Light Manufacturing and Airport LAMIRDs and provide adequate expansion space for compatible activities.

LU 5.4 In Rural Village, Rural Center, Camano Gateway Village, and Rural Service LAMIRDs, encourage multi-family and mixed uses to support housing development and economic development.

LU 5.5 Incentivize and support the development of community and large onsite septic systems and upgrading of existing water systems to accommodate more intensive uses in the LAMIRDs.

LU 5.6 Allow for overnight lodging within Mixed-Use LAMIRDs.

LU 5.7 Encourage compact development within Mixed-Use LAMIRDs to prevent sprawl while utilizing the LAMIRDs for housing and economic opportunities.

LU 5.8 Accommodate the development of affordable worker housing within Light Manufacturing zones.

LU 5.9 In Airport areas, ensure compatibility with existing uses in DeLaurentis Airport, South Whidbey Airpark, or Camano Island Airfield.

LU 5.9.1 Implement site development standards according to the needs of each site.

LU 5.9.2 Protect existing Airport areas from encroachment by incompatible land uses.

LU 5.10 Consider the long term availability of known and/or verifiable water supplies, the general suitability of the area for on-site septic systems, the presence of geologically unstable areas, and the presence of flood or tsunami hazards when establishing density.

LU 5.11 Facilitate pedestrian orientation through site design that incorporates common areas, pedestrian pathways, access to public transit, landscaping, clustering, small parks and compact design.

LU 5.12 Discourage public facilities unless their function or service area is best served by a location outside of a UGA.

LU 5.13 Require all new development to connect to community water systems; encourage existing and new development to connect to community wastewater systems.

Goal 6 Maintain development patterns in rural lands to accommodate low density residential uses compatible with resource lands and critical areas.

LU 6.1 Provide flexibility for cluster developments, consistent with WAC 365-196-425, including allowing for residential density bonuses in return for protection of open space resources and natural resource functions.

LU 6.2 Minimize potential conflicts between residential development and designated commercial agricultural lands.

LU 6.3 Prevent unnecessary conversion of farmland.

LU 6.4 Encourage and protect small scale agriculture activities, including those that occur on land not zoned commercial agriculture, that are compatible with surrounding uses.

LU 6.5 Discourage essential public facilities unless their function or service area is best served by a location outside of a UGA.

LU 6.6 Prohibit the creation of new lots unless they have adequate area outside of tsunami hazards, flood areas, geohazards, and other critical areas.

LU 6.7 Require rural development to use low impact development (LID) techniques and best management practices (BMPs) to reduce stormwater runoff and protect water quality in Puget Sound and local freshwater systems. Development proposals shall incorporate techniques such as minimizing impervious surfaces, using permeable materials, installing bioswales and/or rain gardens, and preserving native vegetation.

Goal 7

Protect agriculture and forestry uses, including both as habitats and as resources, by providing buffers between these uses and urban activities via low residential densities.

LU 7.1 Encourage use of Rural Clusters consistent with WAC 365-196-425 to maintain open space and avoid or minimize the adverse impacts to the visual or physical environment.

LU 7.2 Right to farm and forest measures shall protect the right to pursue farm and forestry activities.

LU 7.3 Allow roadside farm stands, farmers markets, and other compatible agricultural and value-added sales outlets in locations that serve residential areas in proximity to farms.

LU 7.4 Direct nonagricultural uses to land with poor soils or areas otherwise not suitable for agricultural purposes.

LU 7.5 Review Island County code for barriers to agricultural activities, including agri-tourism, and consider ways to remove such barriers.

LU 7.6 Provide tax incentive programs, and other incentives, to encourage agricultural landowners to keep lands in agricultural production.

LU 7.7 Support public and private programs that provide incentives for farmers incentives to stay on the land and for landowners to conserve lands suitable for agricultural use.

LU 7.8 Reserve lands which because of their size, soil type, and active management are part of an essential land base for continued commercial agriculture. Support the continued viability of these lands to serve as a resource for food, fiber, feed, and forage.

LU 7.9 Conserve long term mineral lands to ensure the continued supply of sand, gravel, and non-renewable minerals, and their protection from urban encroachment, as well as environmental protection through appropriate siting, operation, reclamation standards, and groundwater protection measures.

LU 7.10 Explore innovative development concepts that buffer resource lands from development.

LU 7.11 Encourage new agricultural activities to follow best management practices that, when used collectively, provide riparian protection, source control, and filtration to prevent contributing pollutants to surface and ground waters to conserve important habitat areas for salmonids and shorebirds while maintaining working lands.

Goal 8 **Ensure that future development in the Airport and Aviation Safety Overlay protects public health, safety and welfare.**

Policies Applicable to All Airports

LU 8.1 Land use policies and development regulations affecting airports and aviation notification zones shall be updated in accordance with the regulations and recommendations set forth in the Washington State Department of Transportation's Airports and Compatible Land Use Guidebook, CFR Title 14, FAR Part 77, and FAA Terminal Instrument Procedures (TERPS).

LU 8.2 Ensure that the permitting process for any new or expanding airport is subjected to a thorough review. Potential benefits will be carefully considered as will potential adverse impacts.

LU 8.3 Ensure that public or private development around existing airports allows the continued use of that facility as an airport. Land within aircraft approach and departure zones will be protected from inappropriate development.

LU 8.4 Ensure that new land uses which would attract or accommodate large concentrations of people will not be permitted to locate within approach or departure zones and/or Accident Potential Zones of existing airports.

LU 8.5 Help to minimize the number of people exposed to very high aircraft noise levels in areas near airports through compatible land uses. In the highest airport noise level areas open/ undeveloped space will be encouraged and land use densities shall remain low. The objective is to achieve the greatest degree of compatibility and the least public annoyance which can be attained.

LU 8.6 Preserve the right of airport owners and operators to continue present operations and allow for future air transportation and airport facility needs. It is also important to consider the present and future use of private property and the rights of private property owners.

LU 8.7 New dwellings in moderate and high aircraft noise areas will be built to a noise level reducing standard that is higher than that which is obtained by building to current minimum building code standards. Structural noise attenuation standards in the higher noise areas (NAS/OLF) will be greater than that required in moderate aircraft noise areas.

LU 8.8 Island County will notify the airport operator, state and federal aviation agencies, at the time of initial application, of any proposed actions or projects, which would lead to development near an airport that is not compatible with the airport's operations. The airport operator shall notify Island County, and potentially affected citizens, of any proposed operational changes which would have a significant impact on existing land uses.

LU 8.9 Land use proposals, structures, or objects that would interfere with the safe operation of aircraft will be examined for compatibility as defined in CFR Title 14, FAR Part 77 and FAA Terminal Instrument Procedures (TERPS). The object is to permit land uses which allow safe aircraft operations as defined in the documents referenced above.

LU 8.10 A public site plan review is required in the event airport operations exceed an operational growth rate of 30% in 3 years which necessitates expansion of existing airport boundaries.

LU 8.11 Island County will require a Comprehensive Plan Amendment for the establishment of any proposed new airport.

LU 8.12 Require advance notification of future owners or renters of properties within noise impact areas of potentially significant noise impacts.

LU 8.13 Overlay policies and development regulations shall be implemented in addition to those associated with the underlying land use designation. When there is a conflict in policy statements or development regulations, the more restrictive shall apply.

Policies Applicable Only to Military Airports

LU 8.14 Island County will discourage residential development in Aircraft Accident Potential Zones (APZ). To protect the operational use of military airports, Island County will ensure that future development in Accident Potential Zones (APZs) around Ault Field and Outlying Field Coupeville is at the lowest possible density consistent with the underlying land use designation.

LU 8.15 If the Department of Defense should declare surplus any portion of NAS Whidbey Island, the County will work closely with federal and state officials, the City of Oak Harbor, and other appropriate entities to ensure that the base capital facilities are put to the best economic use, consistent with city and county comprehensive plans.

LU 8.16 Island County will continue to work with NAS Whidbey Island to ensure land use will remain compatible with the changing needs and uses of NAS Whidbey Island.

LU 8.17 When applicable, Island County will take action on updated AICUZ and APZ standards provided by NAS Whidbey Island within two (2) years of their production.

Goal 9

Provide for unique areas in the County where special review shall be required through the master plan process to protect lands and structures that have historical, archaeological or environmental significance.

LU 9.1 A master plan shall be required for all developments.

LU 9.2 Protect lands and structures that have historical, archaeological or environmental significance while allowing a unique combination of uses that enhance, conserve or highlight these features of significance.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Island County Comprehensive Plan

2025 Periodic Update

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Since its earliest settlement, Island County has experienced slow but unmistakable development, including the presence of indigenous people on the islands. Economic factors significantly affect Island County's quality of life, and Island County's economic development strategy can encourage appropriate economic development, consistent with the county's rural character and protection of its environment. Long-term economic vitality requires flexibility while encouraging development consistent with the history, assets, and long-term goals. This Element is intended to guide long-term improvements in the use of land, labor, and capital resources in Island County while building on previous work.

Adequate transportation, water, and sewer has been a limiting factor in the economic development of Island County for many years. However, with proper planning and policies, Island County has qualities that can provide a strong economic future. The county is remote enough from metropolitan areas to retain rural character, yet close enough to provide reasonable access to urban markets, business centers, and amenities. This strategic location, along with attributes of charm and quality of life, provides a setting for a diversified economy.

The scale, type, and intensity of economic development must be compatible with Island County's basic assets, as well as particular regional differences. Appropriate development for North, Central and South Whidbey, and Camano Island will vary widely. Close coordination is crucial between these regions and the Cities, the Port, Water, Fire, School, Park and Recreation Districts, Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve, and the Public Transit Benefit Area.

2.2 Background Information

Island County's labor market is near full employment. As of late 2023, the civilian labor force numbered around 36,600 with unemployment hovering at a low three to four percent, down sharply from the pandemic peak of 15.8 percent in April 2020. Local job growth and business re-openings have brought the county back to pre-pandemic employment levels, but many employers still report difficulty filling positions despite the low unemployment rate.

The county's area median income was about \$102,000 (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development data, fiscal year 2024). Average wages are lower than the state average (annual wage \$58,930 vs. \$95,160 statewide in 2024, per the state Employment Security Department), reflecting the prevalence of service and public sector jobs. At the same time, the cost of living has been rising rapidly, with housing, childcare, and other essentials becoming more expensive. Island County's housing market in particular has seen sharp increases: the median home sale price reached over \$600,000 in 2024, up nearly 50 percent from 2017 per Zillow. These trends point to growing affordability challenges for residents despite modest income growth.

Geographically, Island County is somewhat integrated into the broader Puget Sound economy while retaining its island character, but many residents still commute off-island for work or telecommute. For example, Island County residents commute to jobs in Snohomish, Skagit, and King Counties. The expansion of remote work since 2020 has also enabled more island residents to hold metropolitan jobs from home. These connections to external job markets bring income into the community but also underscore the county's dependence on reliable transportation links and digital infrastructure.

Island County’s economic context is shaped by its distinctive geography as a region composed of two islands, combining both rural and marine characteristics. The local economic landscape is defined by several key factors:

- Naval Air Station Whidbey Island (NASWI) serves as the County’s primary economic anchor, contributing significantly to employment and regional stability.
- A thriving tourism and hospitality industry leverages the County’s natural beauty, historic downtowns, recreational assets, farmlands, marine resources, and cultural heritage, drawing both visitors and remote workers.
- An aging and increasingly diverse population is driving demand for expanded healthcare and social services infrastructure, especially in elder care and behavioral health.
- Critical infrastructure gaps including limited broadband coverage, insufficient affordable housing, inadequate childcare capacity, and aging transportation systems pose barriers to economic resilience and growth.
- There are growing opportunities for economic diversification through investment in sustainable agriculture, clean energy technologies, marine trades, remote-friendly professional services, and innovation-led entrepreneurship.

Island County’s economic development efforts should seek to balance the preservation of its rural character and environmental quality with the need to modernize infrastructure, expand living-wage employment, and support an inclusive, resilient economy.

Key economic sectors in Island County and a few important attributes of each sector include:

Government & Military

- NASWI is the largest employer and critical to regional economic stability.
- Supports a robust supply chain and secondary employment across sectors.

Healthcare & Social Assistance

- Rapid growth due to an aging population.
- Essential for job creation and quality-of-life services.

Tourism & Hospitality

- A foundational industry for small business growth.
- Key to place-based economic development.

Construction

- Drives infrastructure and housing development.
- Supports living-wage employment.

Agriculture, Fishing & Food Systems

- Includes small farms, aquaculture, and food value chains.
- Opportunities in innovation, processing, and conservation-based practices.

Retail Trade

- Local economic circulator; supports tourism and community needs.

Professional, Scientific & Technical Services

- Emerging sector for economic diversification.
- Requires broadband expansion and workforce training.

Manufacturing & Maritime Trades

- Niche but strategic; includes boat repair, marine infrastructure, and light industrial growth.

2.3 Economic Strategy

Island County’s economic development planning is closely aligned with broader regional and state strategies. Washington’s Growth Management Act identifies economic development as a statewide planning goal, and the County’s Comprehensive Plan Economic Development Element is designed to be consistent with GMA objectives. The 2024-2028 Island County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) was developed through a collaborative process with county, city, port, and community stakeholders; and in accordance with U.S. Economic Development Administration guidelines. Future iterations of this strategy should use this same collaborative process and inform any updates to this Economic Element. This regional approach is encouraged by federal and state agencies to maximize resources and impact.

Island County’s economic development element seeks to build a resilient, diversified economy that supports local businesses, leverages natural and cultural assets, enhances workforce opportunities, and strengthens critical infrastructure. This element aligns with the goals of the Island County CEDS 2024–2028 and builds on community input, related analysis of Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats (SWOT), and stakeholder priorities.

2.4 Vision Statement

Island County envisions a robust and diverse economy that leverages community assets, sustains natural resources, supports business vitality, and increases the quality of life for all residents.

2.5 Goals and Policies

Goal 1 Promote a Resilient and Diverse Economy

ED 1.1 Support retention and expansion of local businesses, especially those providing living wage jobs.

ED 1.2 Encourage development in professional and technical services, creative industries, clean technology, and other emerging economic sectors, including as home based businesses.

ED 1.3 Support entrepreneurship by expanding access to technical assistance, networking, and capital.

ED 1.4 Promote full access to economic opportunities including for underserved and populations historically disadvantaged.

ED 1.5 Include consideration of climate change and climate hazards in the promotion of a resilient economy.

ED 1.6 Promote and support key industries including healthcare, tourism, construction, agriculture, technical services, defense/military, maritime, and niche manufacturing/light industry.

ED 1.7 Partner with Naval Air Station Whidbey Island (NASWI) to sustain its regional economic impact.

Goal 2 Enhance Infrastructure to Support Economic Development

ED 2.1 Prioritize infrastructure projects that directly support economic development, including broadband expansion, transportation improvements, and water/sewer upgrades.

ED 2.2 Support land use planning that accommodates business growth in designated Urban Growth Areas, Non-municipal Urban Growth Areas, and Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Development.

ED 2.3 Accommodate commercial development and supporting infrastructure in locations that are convenient, safe, attractive, environmentally responsible, and consistent with Island County's land use framework.

ED 2.4 Support the continued operation and reinvestment in existing marinas and water dependent commercial and recreational uses in accordance with the Shoreline Master Program.

ED 2.5 Support development, modernization, and long-term viability of public-use airports that provide for business logistics, tourism, emergency services, and access to regional markets in accordance with rural character and environmental protections.

ED 2.6 Support economic development strategies that enhance resilience to climate impacts, including securing infrastructure, energy reliability, and diversification of climate-sensitive industries.

Goal 3 Strengthen Workforce and Education Systems

ED 3.1 Support workforce, technical, vocational, and skills-based training, and career pathway programs that expand access to postsecondary education, credentials, and certifications that lead to quality, living-wage employment opportunities aligned with local industry needs.

ED 3.2 Promote living-wage job opportunities through career and technical education.

ED 3.3 Support initiatives that improve affordable housing and childcare to enable labor force participation.

ED 3.4 Support initiatives that provide workforce and/or student housing.

Goal 4 Support Rural, Tourism, and Resource-Based Economies

ED 4.1 Protect and enhance the County’s natural assets as economic drivers, especially for tourism and agriculture.

ED 4.2 Support value-added agriculture, aquaculture, and local food systems.

ED 4.3 Expand shoulder-season tourism and destination branding to increase economic stability and reduce strain on public facilities and natural resources.

ED 4.4 Support Special Review Districts for tourism and their other economic benefits to the community.

ED 4.5 Support preparation of a strategic plan for county-wide agriculture to inform and guide decisions about investments including in food processing, distribution, support services, farm land preservation, and regional collaboration.

ED 4.6 Support preparation of a study of the economic costs and benefits of Island County land use classifications such as designated forest, timberlands, and conservation futures acquisitions; and tax incentive programs authorized by state law for resource lands including but not limited to the Public Benefit Rating System (PBRS). This study should concentrate on quantifiable economic metrics and exclude consideration of topics that are difficult to monetize such as habitat, recreation on private lands, community ambiance, and livability.

Goal 5 Strengthen Partnerships and Infrastructure Advocacy

ED 5.1 Partner with ports, municipalities, tribes, state agencies, NAS Whidbey Island, local nonprofits, and chambers to align programs, funding, and strategy.

ED 5.2 Preserve and strengthen the relationship with the local associate development organization to ensure ongoing collaboration, program alignment, and coordinated implementation of economic strategies.

ED 5.3 Advocate for state and federal investment in Island County priorities including those that increase capacity for elder care, behavioral health, and rural health services.

ED 5.4 Advocate for bridge upgrades, ferry service reliability, and long-term resiliency improvements to support workforce mobility, business logistics, and access to markets.

HOUSING



Island County Comprehensive Plan

2025 Periodic Update

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HOUSING

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The Housing Element of the Comprehensive Plan outlines current housing conditions and future housing needs in Island County for the 20-year planning period, to be included in the Comprehensive Plan as required by the Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.070(2)). The future housing needs are estimated using the population projections in the revised Countywide Planning Policies.

Island County has several housing related challenges, including the need for a variety of housing types and the need for more housing affordable to low-income households. The need for housing over the 20-year planning period includes accommodating housing at all income levels, which likely means more diversity in housing types, more rental options, smaller units, and senior housing. However, the rural nature of much of Island County presents challenges for developing new housing due to limited infrastructure for septic and water.

The County should balance the vitality of existing housing stock and neighborhood character with the changing housing needs of Island residents. In order to accomplish this goal, Island County must promote safe and healthy residential areas, while increasing the supply and diversity of housing.

One of the few things virtually all Island County residents agree on is that people choose to live and work here because of the rural landscape. Island County's rural character is one of our most valued assets, providing scenic views with diverse working farms, forests, and shorelines. Long-time residents and newcomers alike agree that our rural development patterns with homes set apart across large acre parcels allows people the privacy to set their own pace of life and brings people closer to nature. Rural character is also the basis for the County's tourist industry, and a primary reason people visit our islands is to enjoy our rural experiences.

The geography of our islands makes rural communities spread out and some areas of the County lack nearby adjacent urban areas. The County's vision to maintain rural character while meeting the needs of residents includes providing equitable access to jobs and housing, regardless of geography and/or socio-economic status. The County will achieve this by locating the majority of dense housing in UGAs and LAMIRDs, and planning for clustered and detached housing types to accommodate all incomes in rural areas. Additionally, the County will continue to preserve and protect agriculture, encourage development that keeps forest lands intact, and maintain views and access to the shorelines to protect our rural character as more people are coming to live and enjoy this special place. This approach is consistent with Island County's rural character and WAC 365-195-425(3), (4), and (5) regarding rural lands.

The Housing Element provides policy direction for Island County to address these challenges. This policy direction is established in the adopted housing goals and policies. Goals are the primary housing related objectives and outcomes the County wants to achieve over the 20-year planning period. The related policies provide guidance on County actions, such as programs, regulations, and funding, to achieve those goals.

This Element is broken down into the following sections:

1. An inventory of the current housing stock, conditions, and barriers to housing
2. Population and demographic trends
3. Racially disparate impacts, displacement, and exclusion risks
4. A forecast of housing needs and capacity
5. Goals and policies

4.2 HOUSING INVENTORY

Island County’s existing supply of housing reflects past growth, market demand, and regulations in Island County. This section summarizes Island County’s existing housing stock, including the number of units by type and price. This section also considers recent development trends and housing vacancy in Island County.

4.2.1 Housing Units

According to the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM), there are approximately 42,954 housing units in Island County as of 2025. The majority of those units (78 percent) are single-unit homes. Multifamily housing (buildings with two or more units) represents 11 percent of the total housing stock with most of the multifamily housing stock within Oak Harbor.

Table 4-1. Housing Units by Type and Jurisdiction, 2024

Location	Single-family	2+ Units	Mobile Homes	Total
City of Oak Harbor	6,188	3,441	555	10,184
Town of Coupeville	697	221	129	1,047
Town of Langley	549	224	0	773
Unincorporated	25,940	829	4,181	30,950
Island County	33,374	4,715	4,865	42,954

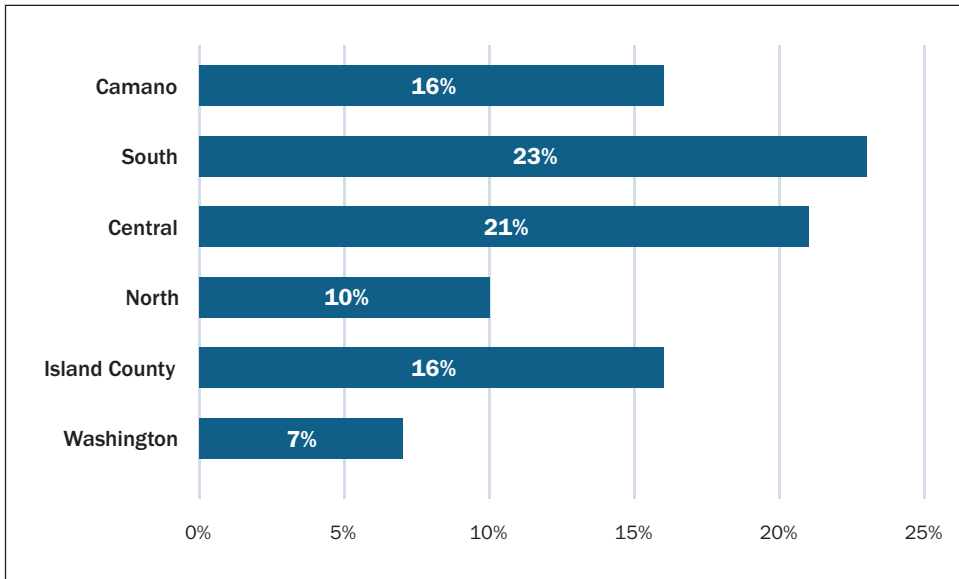
Source: Office of Financial Management.

Mobile homes (as defined by the OFM and American Community Survey) are over 11 percent of total housing stock.

The housing stock in Island County is a mix of ages. Since 2016, just 2,859 new units have been built, and only three units of those have been multifamily units. From 2016 to 2022, the county averaged 334 new housing units each year. Since then, building has slowed down with an average of 258 new units in 2023 and 2024.

The percentage of units that are vacant in Island County is higher relative to Washington State. Based on the 2023 Census, about 16 percent of housing units in Island County are vacant, which is double the vacancy rate for Washington State.

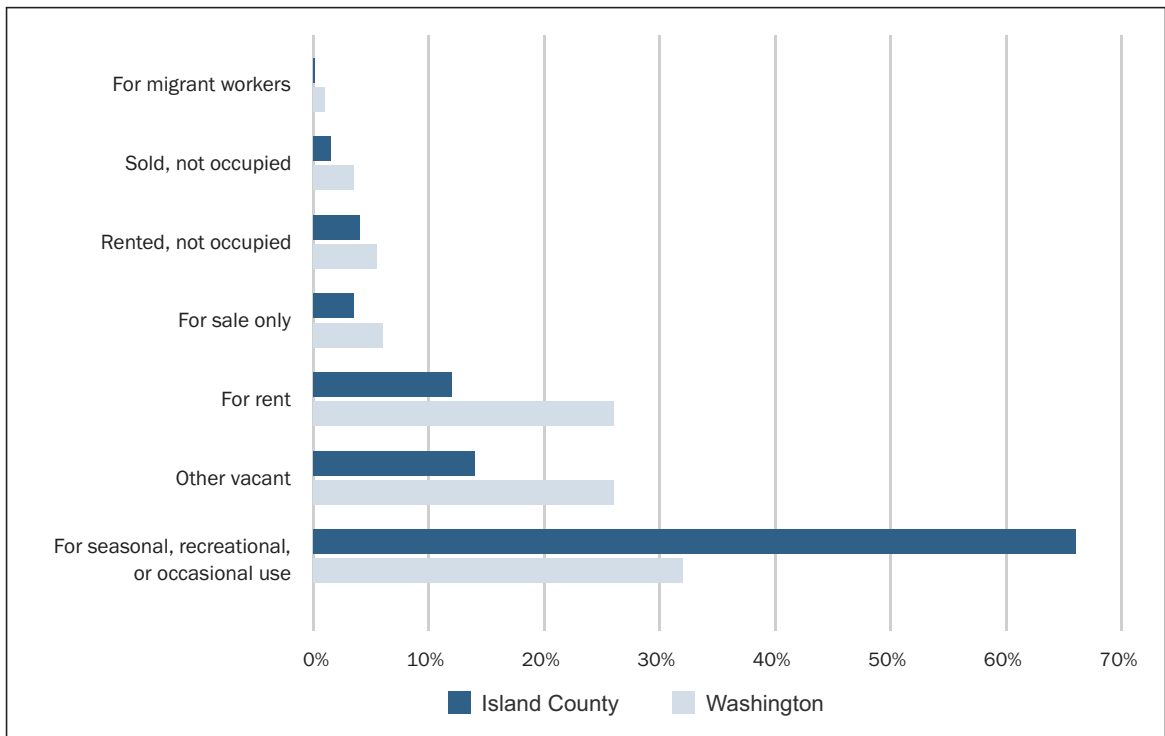
Figure 4-2. Vacancy Status, Island County, Washington State 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimate

The most common reason for vacancies is that homes have seasonal, recreational, and occasional uses, which is the reason for over 60 percent of vacant units in Island County. The high vacancy rate creates barriers to long-term housing.

Figure 4-3. Vacancy Reason, Island County and Washington State, 2023

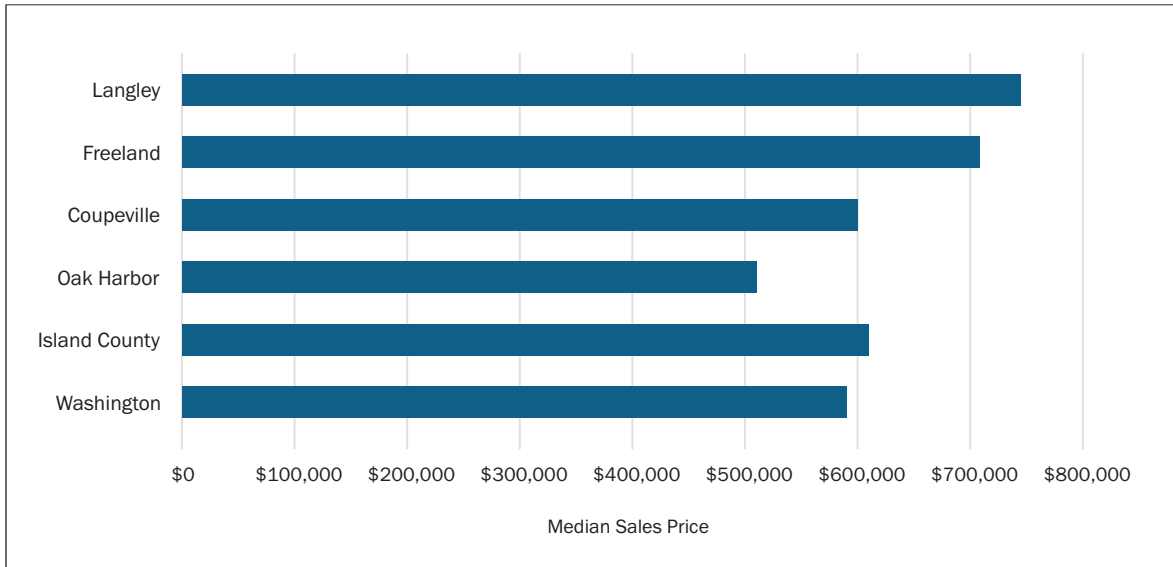


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimate

4.2.2 Housing Prices

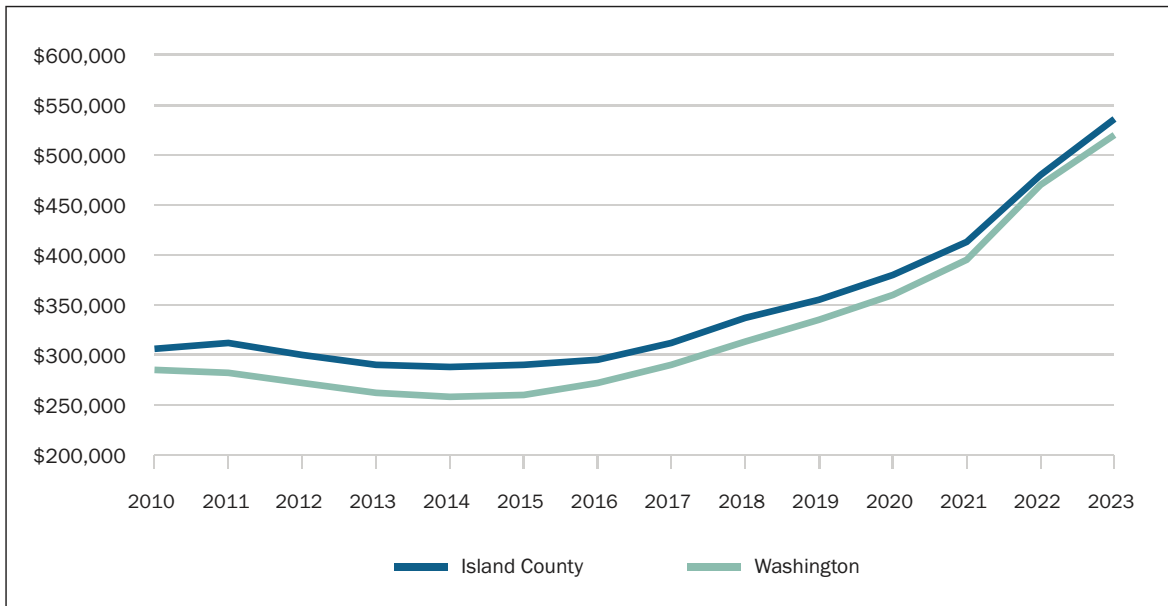
In 2024, Island County had a median sales price of over \$600,000, a 50 percent increase since 2017. Home sales prices in Island County have followed a similar trend to Washington State. The rising costs of housing creates barriers to affordability.

Figure 4-4. Median Sales Price, Island County as of December 2024



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimate

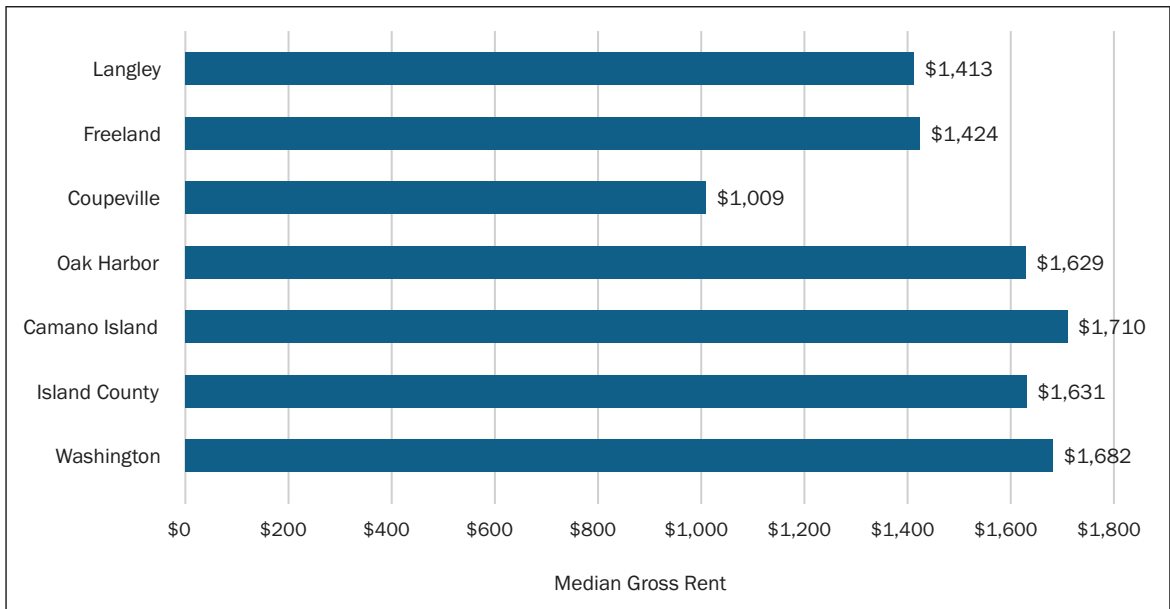
Figure 4-5. Median Sales Price, Island County and Washington State, 2010-2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimate

The median gross rent in Island County for 2018-2023 was \$1,682, an increase of \$600 since 2017. Rent on Camano Island is higher than the Washington State average.

Figure 4-6. Median Gross Rent, Island County, Washington State, and Selected Areas, 2018-2023



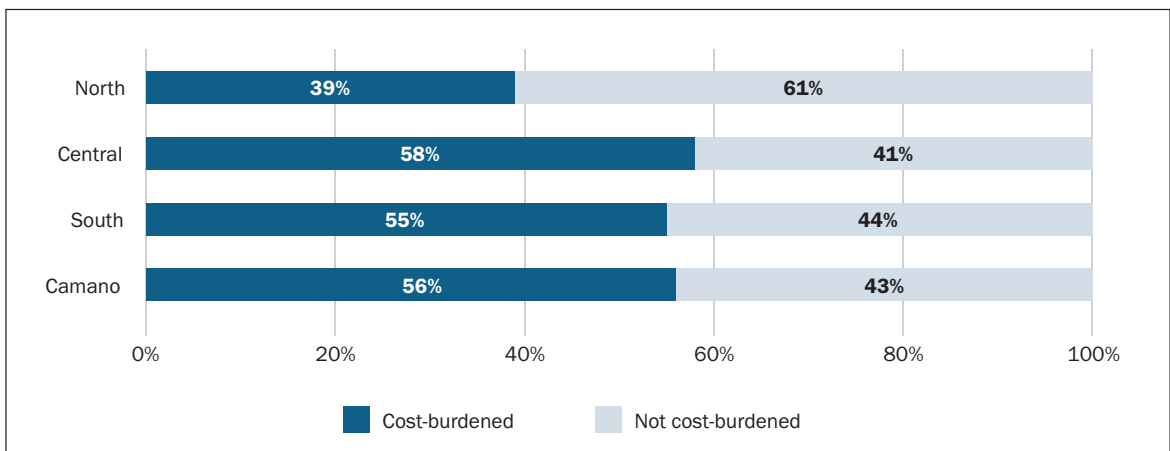
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2023 ACS 5-Year Estimate

4.2.3 Housing Affordability

The typical standard used to determine housing affordability is that a household should pay no more than a certain percentage of household income for housing, including payments and interest or rent, utilities, and insurance. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) guidelines indicate that households paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing are “cost burdened” and households paying more than 50 percent of their income on housing are “severely cost burdened.”

In the 2012-2016 period, about 35 percent of Island County’s households were cost burdened. In 2023, that number jumped to 52 percent. Residents in Central and South Whidbey, and Camano Island, have become severely cost burdened in the last 10 years. The marked increase in cost burdened households across the county makes our population a lot more vulnerable to displacement.

Figure 4-7. Housing Cost Burden by Area 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimate

Demographics projects the largest increase in population of residents in the 80-84 and 85+ age range from 2025 to 2045. Residents in this demographic rely on fixed incomes which can lead them to become cost burdened and severely cost burdened as they age. Affordable housing options for seniors have long wait lists of up to 10 years. Many seniors are forced to age in place while they wait for an opening, straining their limited resources. Increasing affordable housing options for the aging population will be an important part of lowering the percentage of cost burdened households in Island County.

Table 4-8. Supportive Housing in Island County 2025

Supportive Housing in Island County	
Housing Category	Capacity (Beds)
Night to Night Shelter	30 beds
Night to Night Shelter Youth (18-24 year olds)	15 beds
Emergency Shelters	53 beds
Transitional Housing	21 beds
Permanent Supportive Housing	0 beds
Transitional Housing Youth (18-24 year olds)	16 beds

Source: Island County Housing Support Center

Transitional Housing

A project that has as its purpose facilitating the movement of homeless individuals and families to permanent housing within a reasonable amount of time (usually 24 months).

Emergency Shelter

Short-term facilities are intended to provide temporary shelter (up to 90 days) to eligible individuals to prevent homelessness and allow an opportunity to develop an individualized housing and service plan to guide the client’s linkage to permanent housing.

Night to Night Shelter

Any facility, the primary purpose of which is to provide a temporary shelter for the homeless in general or for specific populations of the homeless and which does not require occupants to sign leases or occupancy agreements.

Supportive Housing

A combination of housing and services intended as a cost-effective way to help people live more stable, productive lives. Supportive housing is widely believed to work well for those who face the most complex challenges; individuals and families confronted with homelessness and who also have very low incomes and/or serious, persistent issues that may include substance use disorders, mental health, chronic illness, diverse disabilities or other serious challenges to stable housing. Supportive housing can be coupled with such social services as job training, life skills training, alcohol and substance use disorder treatment, community support services and case management.

Source: Department of Housing & Urban Development

4.2.4 Housing Needs Analysis

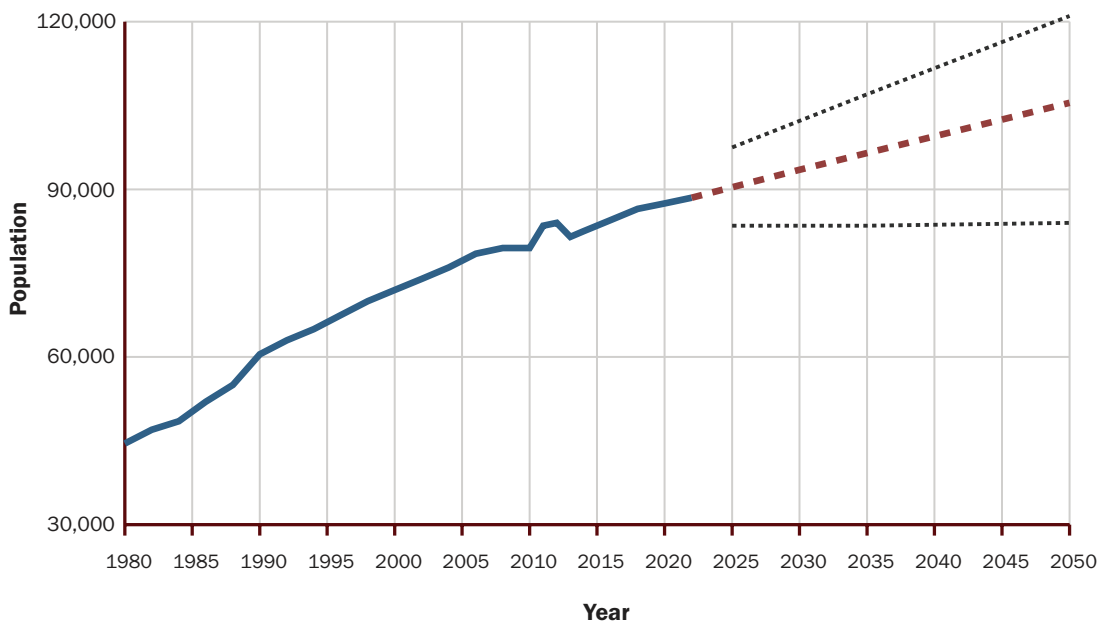
Housing demand is determined by the preferences for different types of housing (e.g., single-family detached or apartment), and the ability to pay for that housing (the ability to exercise those preferences in a housing market by purchasing or renting housing). Preferences for housing are related to demographic characteristics and changes, in addition to personal preferences. The ability to pay for housing is based on income and housing costs. The following two sections analyze and discuss these factors.

4.3 POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

The last comprehensive plan update selected a population growth estimate between the low and medium range provided by the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) due to slower than anticipated population growth over the previous ten-year period. Since then, the County's population has grown faster than planned and between 2015 and 2020, Island County added 6,257 new residents. The population growth estimates for the last comprehensive plan were met or exceeded in 2022, more than ten years before anticipated.

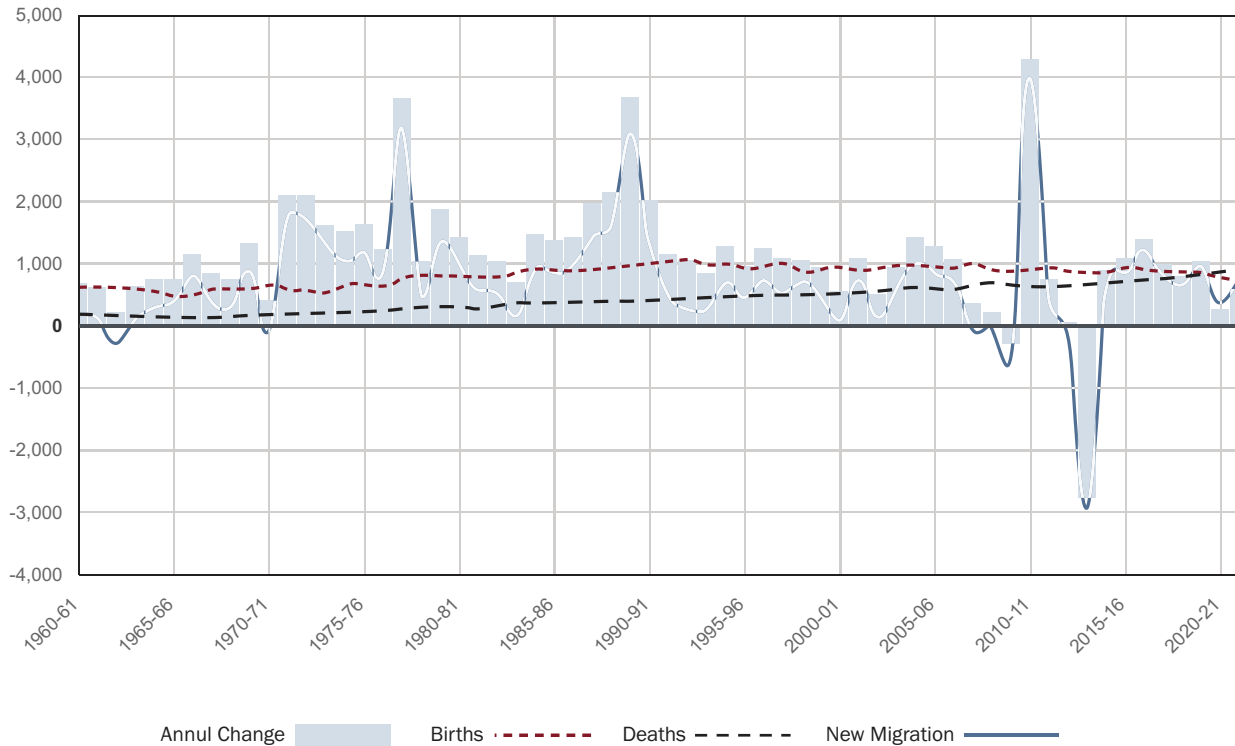
The County's population projection is 99,202 for the 2025 Comprehensive Plan update, which is based on the OFM mid-range projection (adjusted down for infrastructure challenges) and anticipates 12,345 new residents by 2045.

Figure 4-9. Annual Population Growth 2022 (High, Medium, and Low Projections)



Source: Washington State Office of Financial Management 2022

Figure 4-10. Population Change 2022



Source: Washington State Office of Financial Management 2022

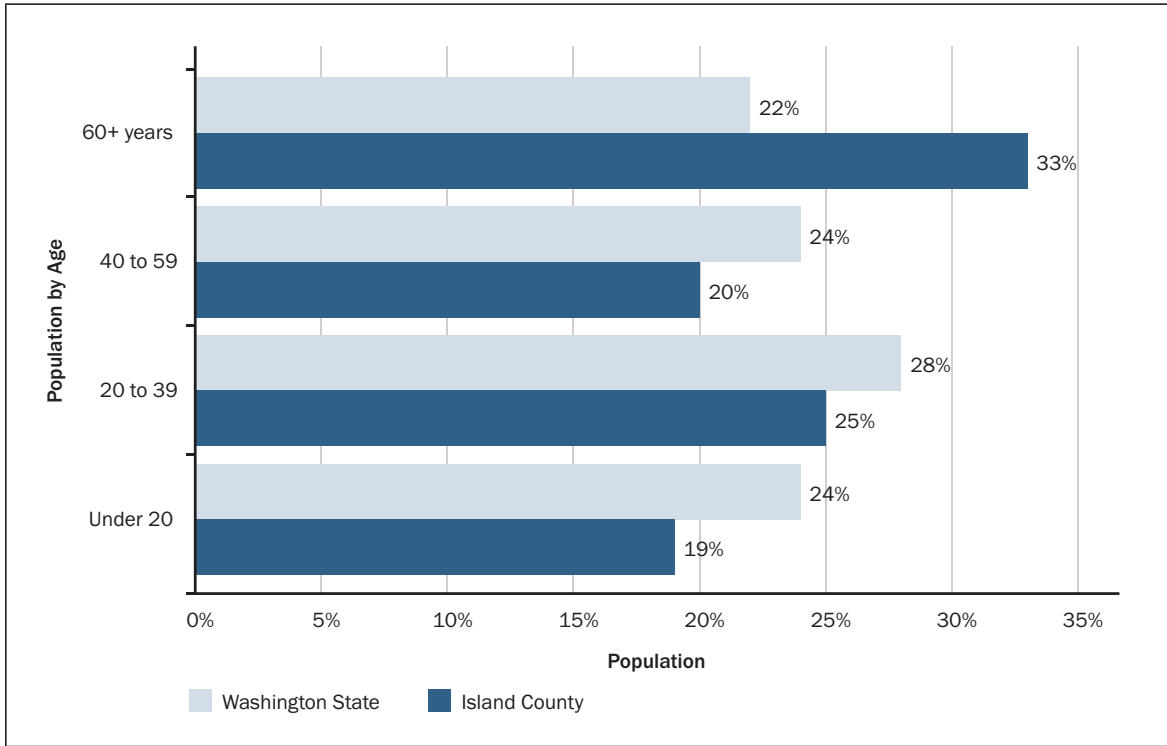
4.3.1 Demographics

In the last ten years, Island County’s portion of people aged 60 and older rose four percent and is ten percentage points higher than the Washington State average (33 percent versus 22 percent, respectively). In the last ten years, Island County has lost residents in the 40-59 age ranges, while gaining modestly in the other age ranges. These factors indicate that Island County continues to have an aging population.

Population projections from OFM indicate that from 2024 to 2045, Island County will see the largest increases in those 80-84 and 85+ with an estimated 7,314 residents. The second largest age group increase is anticipated in ages 45-50 and 50-54, with an estimated 6,236 new residents in these age groups. OFM is projecting a slight decline in age groups 65-69 and 70-74, and very modest growth in the age groups under 40.

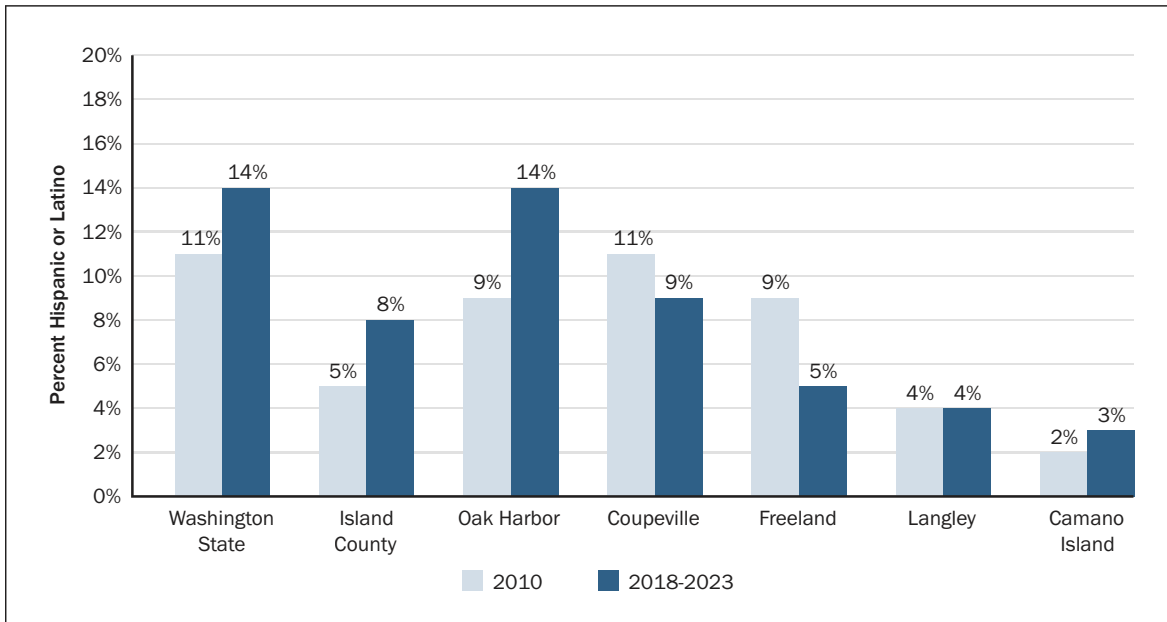
Island County’s population is predominantly white non-Hispanic and over 65 years of age. Diversity is increasing in some areas. The Hispanic and Latino population grew five percent in the 2010–2023 period. The population of Island County remains less ethnically diverse than Washington State. Oak Harbor and Coupeville are more ethnically diverse than the Island County average, with the Hispanic and Latino population making up 9.3 percent and 14.1 percent of residents, respectively.

Figure 4-11. Population Distribution by Age, Island County and Washington State



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimate

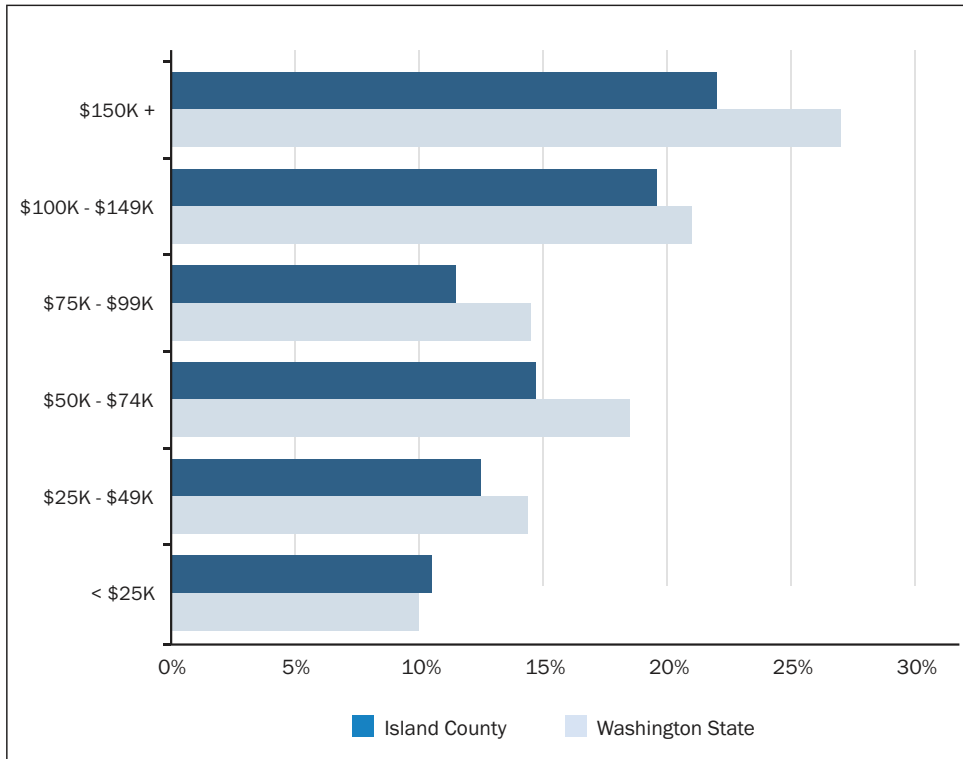
Figure 4-12. Hispanic or Latino Population as a Percent of the Total Population, Island County, Washington State, and Selected Urban areas, 2000 to 2018-2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimate

Income is one of the key determinants in housing choice and households' ability to afford housing. For the 2018–2023 period, Island County gained residents at the higher incomes, and lost residents at the lower income levels. The households with income over \$150,000 went up from eight percent to 22 percent, while the households making less than \$50,000 per year dropped from 24 percent to 14 percent. These trends are similar to the trends across Washington State.

Figure 4-13. Household Income, Island County, and Washington State, 2018-2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimate

4.4 RACIALLY DISPERATE IMPACTS, DISPLACEMENT, AND EXCLUSION RISKS IN HOUSING

In 2021, the Washington Legislature changed the way communities are required to plan for housing with House Bill 1220 (HB1220). Local governments are now required to “plan for and accommodate” housing affordable to all income levels. In addition, new changes require local jurisdictions to examine racially disparate impacts, displacement, and exclusion risks in housing policies and regulations to begin to undo the impacts.

The median family income in Island County in 2025 is \$102,000 as reported by HUD. This sets the 50 percent area median income limit for a family of four at \$55,700 for the county.

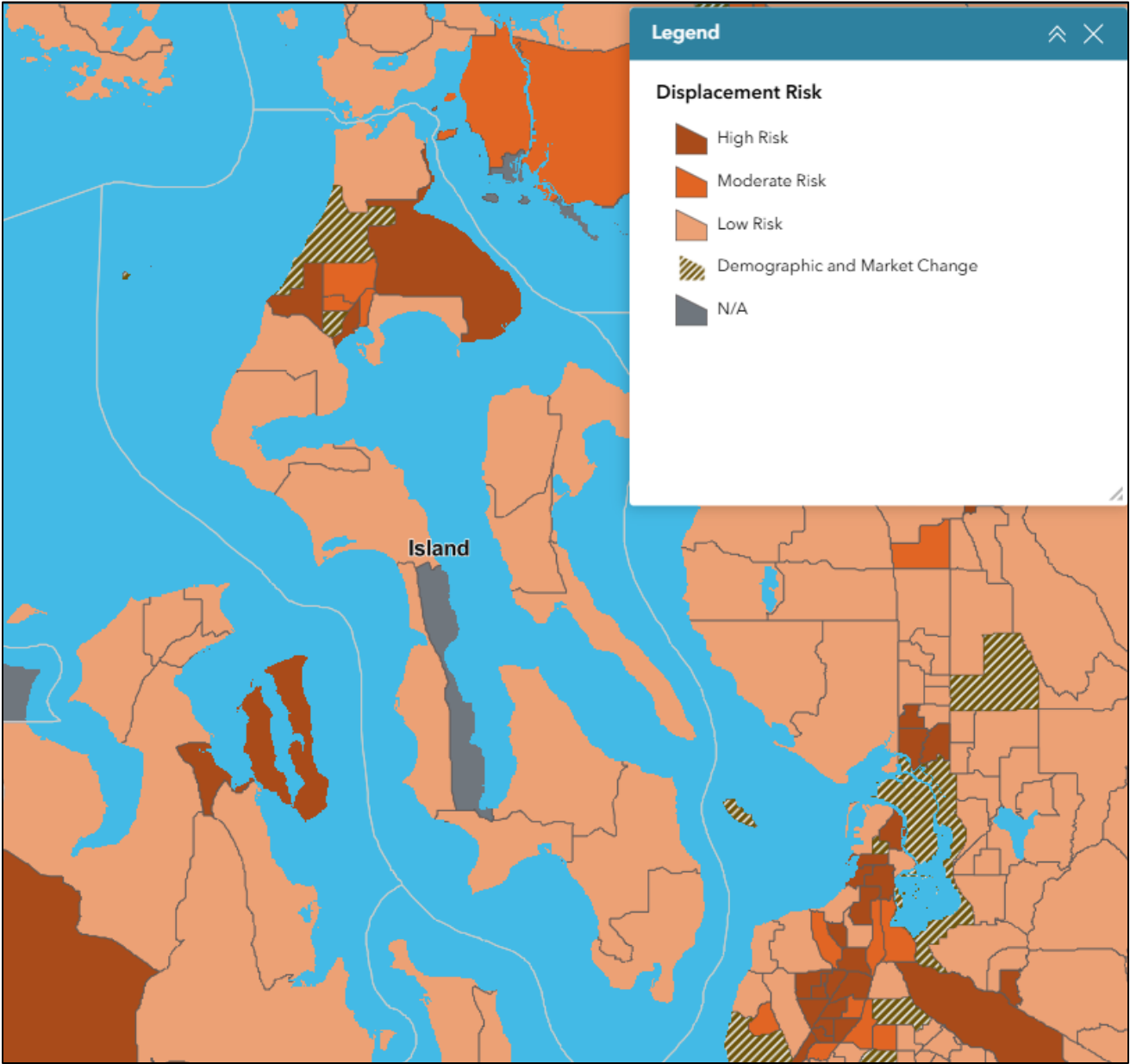
Area Median Income (AMI)

The Area Median Income (AMI) is the midpoint of a region’s income distribution; half of families in a region earn more than the median and half earn less than the median. For housing policy, income thresholds set relative to the area median income (such as 50 percent of the area median income) identify households eligible to live in income-restricted housing units and the affordability of housing units to low-income households.

As the cost-of-living increases, risk of displacement also increases. Displacement in housing is when a household is forced to move for reasons beyond their control. Displacement can happen because of eviction or foreclosure, because the cost of living becomes too high, or because of community or cultural reasons. Displacement risks are rated as high in North Whidbey and Oak Harbor compared to the rest of the County, according to the Department of Commerce’s analysis.

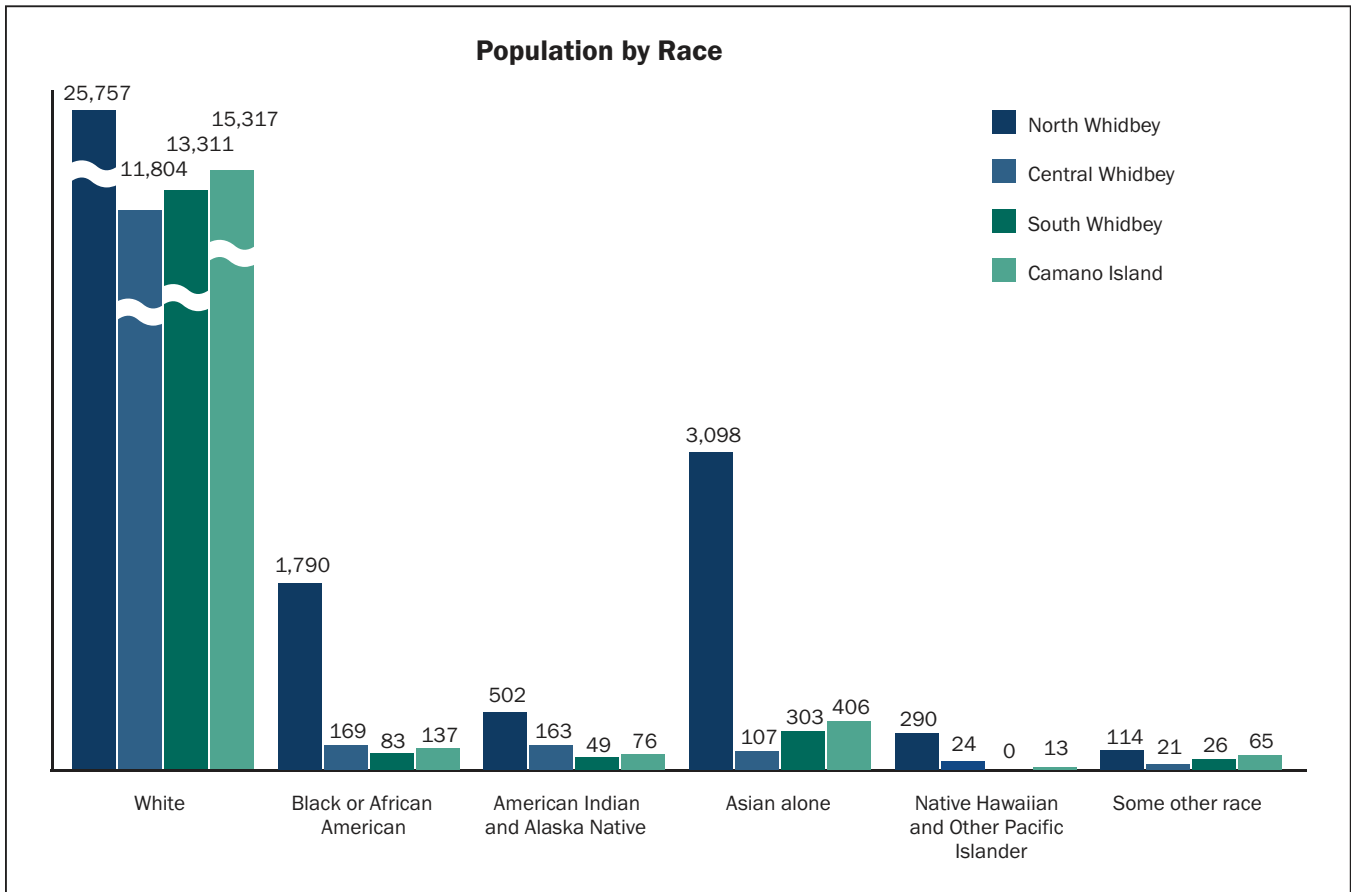
Communities of color are at particular risk of displacement. As illustrated in Figures 4-12 and 4-16, North Whidbey has the most racial and ethnic diversity in the county, followed by Central Whidbey. South Whidbey and Camano are made up of predominantly white non-Hispanic populations. Island County as a whole is less diverse than mainland counties in terms of racial and ethnic diversity.

Figure 4-14. Displacement Risk Map for Island County (Dept. of Commerce)



Source: Washington Department of Commerce

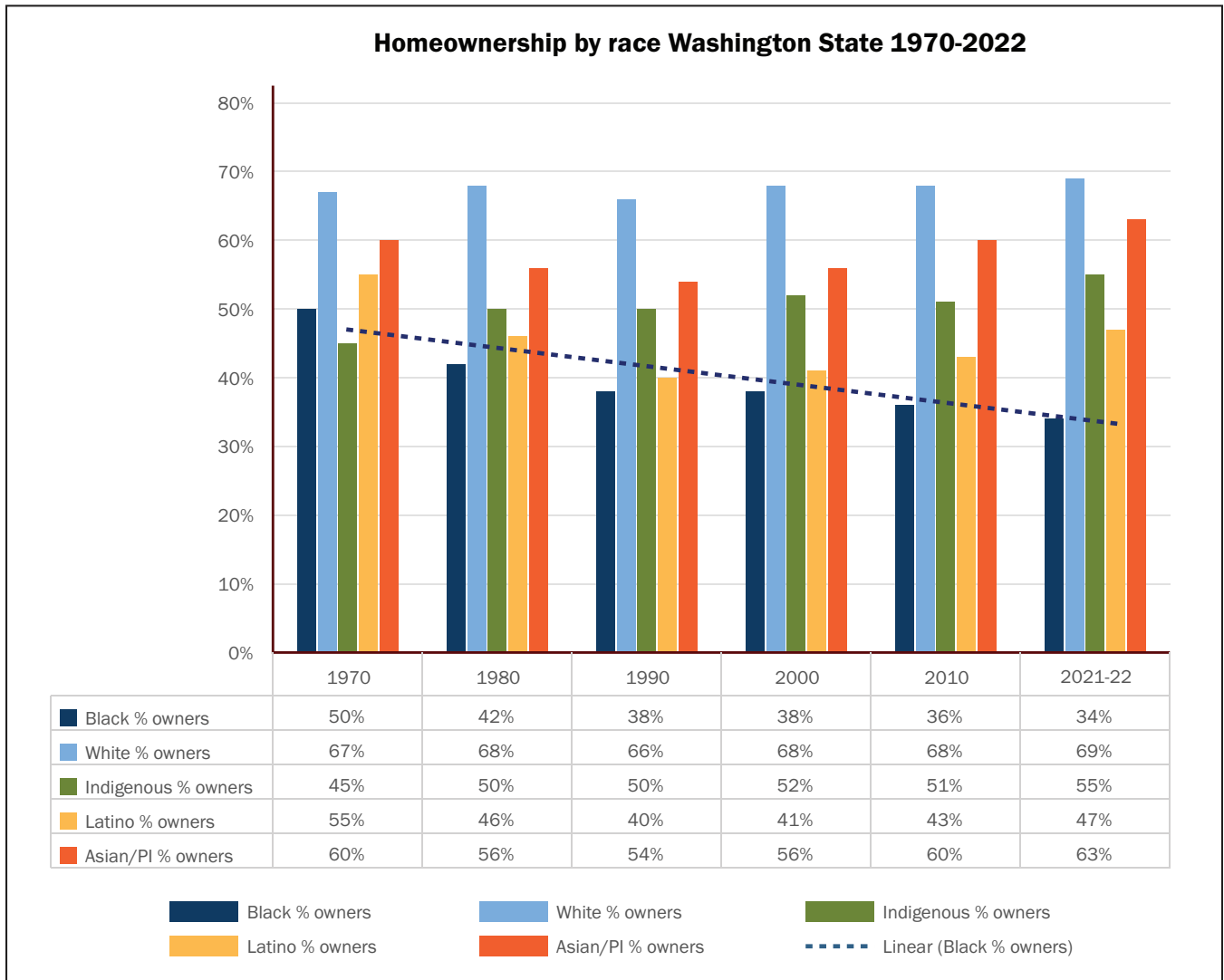
Figure 4-15. Population By Race for Island County



Source: Economic Development Council Island County, Demographics Report 2022

Historically, people of color have been subject to racist and discriminatory practices in housing, which have created inequities in home ownership rates for generations. People of color are disproportionately renters, making them even more vulnerable to price increases and a tight housing market. Island County's home ownership rate is 76 percent according to the 2023 U.S. Census which is 20 percent higher than the state average. This makes it very difficult for renters to find stable housing in our communities.

Figure 4-16. Homeownership by Race for Washington State



Source: Racial Restrictive Covenants Project, Washington State

4.5.1 Housing Needs and Forecast

Island County’s 2045 population forecast is 99,202, this represents 7,176 new dwelling units over the next 20 years. This section describes the key assumptions and presents an estimate of new housing units needed in unincorporated Island County to accommodate this population growth.

Unincorporated Island County needs 2,388 new dwelling units over the 20 years to meet the growing demands for housing in our area. Of these 2,388 new units, over 900 units of housing are needed within the 0-50 percent AMI levels. Currently, 64 percent of Island County’s housing is over 100 percent AMI. Very little multi-family and affordable housing types exist in unincorporated Island County and therefore the focus over the next 20 years needs to be in accommodating lower income levels with more affordable housing types.

Table 4-17. Housing for All Planning Tool (HAPT), 2025

Island County		Projection Year: 2045 Population Target = 99,202		Permanent Housing Needs by Income Level (% of Area Median Income)							Emergency Housing Needs (Temporary)
		Total	0-30%	PSH	>30-50%	>50-80%	>80-100%	>100-120%	>120%		
User Input - % Share of County Population Growth. Values must sum to 100%		100.00% Met Target <-- Sum of user inputs for jurisdiction shares of county future net housing need. If below 100%, increase shares. If above 100%, decrease shares.									
		* The location of 10 existing permanent supportive housing units within Island County is unknown. Therefore, they are not included in the jurisdiction table below.									
		Total	0-30%	PSH*	>30-50%	>50-80%	>80-100%	>100-120%	>120%	Emergency Housing Needs (Temporary)	
33.27 %	Unincorporated Island County	Estimated Housing Supply (2020)	25,445	598	8	1,580	3,311	3,676	3,788	12,484	28
		Allocation Method A (2020-2045)	2,388	270	230	486	414	196	187	604	73
4.88 %	Coupeville town	Estimated Housing Supply (2020)	1,017	73	0	191	162	77	118	396	0
		Allocation Method A (2020-2045)	350	40	34	71	61	29	27	89	11
6.22 %	Langley city	Estimated Housing Supply (2020)	743	74	0	34	90	125	107	313	21
		Allocation Method A (2020-2045)	446	50	43	91	77	37	35	113	14
55.63 %	Oak Harbor city	Estimated Housing Supply (2020)	10,057	465	0	1,110	3,916	2,000	721	1,845	67
		Allocation Method A (2020-2045)	3,992	486	455	912	714	298	278	849	140

Source: Washington Department of Commerce, HAPT 2025

Table 4-18. Island County Housing Needs, 2025

	Total Housing Units	0-30%	30-50%	50-80%	80-100%	100-120%	120+	Emergency Housing
Existing Stock	25,445	606	1,580	3,311	3,676	3,788	12,484	28
2045 Allocations	2,388	500	486	414	196	187	604	73

Source: HAPT

4.5.2 Housing Capacity

The County conducted a Lands Capacity Analysis as a part of the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update, the capacity analysis process is outlined in the Countywide Planning Policies. The new requirements from HB 1220 break out housing units by income level. The capacity analysis for the County demonstrated a distinct lack of housing at the lower income levels, with the largest deficits occurring between 0-30 percent and 30-50 percent AMI levels. (See Lands Capacity Analysis for additional details.)

The housing deficits identified in the capacity analysis are not surprising given the predominance of single-family housing in Island County and the high rates of home ownership. The focus over the next 20 years must be on creating capacity at the lower income levels to create more equity in housing types.

Proposed changes to meet the housing demands include:

- Planning for infrastructure to support density in the County’s NMUGA
- Code changes in Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Development (LAMIRDs)
- Updates to Rural Cluster housing provision
- Allowances for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)
- Co-Living Housing required updates
- Recreational vehicles on single-family lots
- Other zoning changes to support supportive housing

More information on the above housing changes can be found in the 2025 Comprehensive Plan SEPA. The resulting capacity gained from these housing changes are summarized in the tables below:

Figure 4-19. Summary of Housing Capacity by Income Level with Code Updates

Zone Categories	Income Levels	Projected Need	% from HAPT	Prior Zone Capacity	Zone Capacity with Code Updates	Resulting Capacity Surplus / Deficit
Multifamily	0-30%	500	4%	26	500	0
	30-50%	486	7%	44	491	5
Moderate Density	50-80%	414	13%	212	414	0
	80-100%	196	14%	565	498	302
Low Density	100-120%	187	14%	2,225	2,225	2038
	120%+	604	47%	4,833	4,833	4229

Figure 4-20. Zone Categories by Density Allowed

Zoning	Housing Types Allowed	Max Density Allowed* (dwelling units)	Assigned Zone Category
Rural	Single family, ADU, rural clusters, group home, manufactured home park	1 du per 5 acres	Low Density
Rural Forest	Single family, ADU, rural clusters, group home, manufactured home park	1 du per 10 acres	Low Density
Rural Ag	Single family, ADU, rural clusters, group home, farm worker housing	1 du per 10 acres	Low Density
Rural Residential LAMIRDs	Single family, ADU, duplex, triplex, fourplex, group home	1.8 du per acre	Low Density, Moderate Density
Mixed Use LAMIRDs	Mixed-use, multi-family, group home	8 du per acre	Moderate Density, Multi-family
Freeland UGA	Single family, ADU, cottage housing, group home, mixed-use, multi-family	4.6 du per acre	Multi-family
Oak Harbor UGA	Single family, ADU, cottage housing, group home, mixed-use, multi-family	3 du per 5 acres	Multi-family

*Doesn't include density bonuses.

4.5.3 Funding Strategies for Affordable Housing

Funding the development of housing at affordable levels is a challenge for any jurisdiction and will be an enormous challenge for Island County. It will take creative public and private partnerships to make progress toward meeting the housing deficits in this comprehensive plan. Likely all of the 0-50 percent AMI housing and some 50-80 percent AMI housing (~1,200 units) will require public funding and subsidies to be built.

Current funding sources for affordable housing include (see the 5-year Homeless Housing Plan for more details):

- 1/10th of 1 percent sales tax (local)
- Document recording fees (local)
- Consolidated homeless grant (state)
- House Bill 1406 (local)
- Skagit Home Consortium
- Balance of State / Continuum of Care
- Real Estate Excise Tax (for infrastructure only)
- Rural County Economic Development (for infrastructure only)

Additional state and federal grants and funding will be pursued for specific projects. Local non-profits play a large role in the development of affordable housing in Island County and we anticipate they will continue to play a large role. The County will partner and support these non-profit developers to achieve our shared goals of housing affordable to all income levels across the county.

4.5.4 Emergency Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing

Island County Human Services is updating the Homeless Housing Plan (HAP) at the same time as this comprehensive plan update. The HAP is a 5-year plan that outlines strategies for meeting the Supportive Housing needs for the County.

Additionally, changes to the zoning code were made for voluntary compliance with HB 1220, RCW 35A.21.430, RCW 36.70A.545, and RCW 35.21.683, including:

- Allow for emergency shelter anywhere that overnight lodging is allowed.
- Allow night-to-night shelters in the Rural zone.
- Allow permanent supportive housing in areas zoned for multi-family housing (NMUGAs and LAMIRDs).
- Allow permanent supportive housing and transitional housing in rural cluster developments.
- Allow increased density bonus for affordable housing located on property owned by a religious organization.

4.6 GOALS & POLICIES

Goal 1 Encourage preservation of existing housing stock capacity, as well as subsidized and affordable housing units.

H 1.1 Preserve the existing housing stock to meet the changing needs of residents by continuing to improve the permitting process for remodels/additions, and accessory dwelling units.

H 1.2 Monitor properties that provide affordable housing and identify strategies and resources to preserve their continued affordability.

H 1.2.1 Collaborate with nonprofit organizations on using deed restrictions as a means to preserve housing affordability.

H 1.3 Incentivize and build awareness of resources and programs available for housing repair and rehabilitation for homeowners; examples may include weatherization, resiliency to sea level rise, septic repair or compliance with flood hazard regulations.

H 1.4 Support the preservation of manufactured home parks in Island County, by allocating of County funds for infrastructure (e.g., aging septic, water, etc.) and the purchase of parks by residents to preserve the community, as a component of the County's affordable housing stock.

H 1.5 Develop strategies to accommodate the re-use of existing housing and historic structures in residential areas including potential incentives for co-living housing, intergenerational housing, and relocation of houses to other sites.

H 1.6 Implement policies and regulations and require registration of existing and future short-term rentals in the County to reduce the impact of short-term rentals on long-term housing.

H 1.6.1 Consider restrictions on the number of housing units that may be used as short-term rentals to preserve residential housing supplies while also protecting areas that rely on tourism activity for economic opportunities.

H 1.7 Implement development regulations for the LAMIRDs and NMUGAs that are compatible with moderate density housing that promote pedestrian connectivity, employment locations, and support the County in meeting our housing allocations.

Goal 2 Promote the development of long-term rental and affordable housing to meet the needs of all demographic segments of the population, housing tenure choices, and income levels. Provide for more diverse housing types in locations where infrastructure, public transit, and community services are readily accessible, planned in the near future, or are included as part of a new development.

H 2.1 Accommodate the construction of multi-family units, primarily rentals, in areas where higher densities are permitted and where infrastructure, including but not limited to public transportation, water, and wastewater is already available or can be supported.

H 2.2 Incentivize the development of housing suitable to the needs of older adults, including independent and assisted living housing, in Mixed Use LAMIRDs and UGAs.

H 2.3 Allow a range of housing types, including the siting of cluster developments in Rural zones, and duplexes, triplexes, and/or fourplexes in all Rural Residential zones, in Mixed Use LAMIRDs and UGAs, and educate homeowners associations about middle housing.

H 2.4 Incentivize the development of innovative housing approaches, such as cluster housing, in areas of the county where the predominance of rural zones and lack of a UGA presents challenges for meeting a diversity of housing needs, including on land owned by religious organizations, to accommodate housing for all income levels.

H 2.5 Implement regulations to provide expanded opportunities, incentives, and remove unnecessary barriers and/or impediments to the development of the following housing types: co-living housing, permanent and seasonal farm worker housing, accessory dwelling units manufactured housing communities and manufactured homes, rural clusters, and other small dwelling unit types like tiny homes.

H 2.6 Accommodate infill development in LAMIRDs and UGAs by implementing minimum density requirements and increased height limits; and consider incentives with specific attention to the incentives identified under RCW 36.70A.540.

H 2.7 Pursue options to allow housing structures to accommodate temporary unhoused housing needs and temporary economic workforce needs.

H 2.8 Monitor Island County’s housing development and periodically compare to housing development targets in the Comprehensive Plan and buildable land supply. Require municipalities to submit an activities report for tracking purposes annually.

H 2.9 Incentivize innovative housing options with septic and water infrastructure, such as pilot programs to encourage specific types of housing, and address in county housing policies, programs, funding, and local zoning regulations.

H 2.10 Develop and allow “pre-approved” or “permit ready” building permit plans for detached accessory dwelling units and other potential housing types in appropriate locations.

H 2.11 Identify opportunities to lower labor and materials costs by supporting and encouraging alternative housing designs, materials and construction, such as self-help/sweat-equity housing, owner-built housing, tiny homes, manufactured homes, community sewage infrastructure, community drinking water, and the use of existing or reclaimed building materials.

H 2.12 Provide funding for identified sites or partner with non-profit or community-based organization to create additional locations for, and encourage the siting of, recreational vehicle parks as a temporary lodging option.

H 2.13 Continue to identify and evaluate opportunities to streamline interdepartmental permitting and create a one-stop-shop for affordable housing developments.

H 2.14 Provide flexibility for a recreational vehicle to be used as temporary housing on developed single family residential lots in residential zones with adequate utilities including but not limited to water, septic, and electricity.

H 2.15 Utilize 1590 funds (10th of 1% sale tax) to demonstrate the County’s commitment to affordable housing initiatives.

H 2.16 Allow provisions for accessory dwelling units (ADUs), consistent with RCW 36.70A.681, to support ADUs as an affordable housing type with deed restrictions.

H 2.17 Pursue innovative public and private partnership models for infrastructure development to support affordable housing.

H 2.18 Incentivize a variety of ownership opportunities and choices by allowing and supporting the creation of condominiums, mutual housing associations, limited equity cooperatives, and community land trusts.

Goal 3 **Collect census data on age, race, and ethnicity data and analyze for racial disparities in access to affordable rent, rental cost burden, home ownership, and displacement.**

H 3.1 Support the development of and facilitate transitional housing, coordinated with critical support services, for youth, adults, seniors, families, and those with disabilities.

H 3.2 Support the development of emergency shelters and temporary housing for those in need through public private partnerships and commitment of County funding.

H 3.3 Ensure that community housing and shelter needs are considered and addressed in county housing policies, programs, funding, and local zoning regulations.

H 3.4 Evaluate and consider implementing the recommendations of the Tri-County Consortium’s 2018 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice and successor Fair Housing Plans to affirmatively further Fair Housing in Island County.

H 3.5 Promote community and landlord awareness of and compliance with federal and state Fair Housing laws through training in cultural awareness for housing providers and realtors.

H 3.6 Increase the representation of people of color, low-income, and marginalized voices on boards and committees that make recommendations concerning housing-related policies, programs or funding.

H 3.7 Protect existing underutilized and non-conforming affordable housing, like manufactured home parks, from redevelopment and displacement of residents.

H 3.8 Establish requirements and/or add incentives for new housing developments to include a percentage of the project for affordable housing and/or for seniors, veterans, active duty military, and people with disabilities.

H 3.9 Avoid siting housing related essential public facilities in AICUZ/APZ zoned lands.

Goal 4 **Promote changes that reduce the amount of cost burdened households by 10 percent.**

H 4.1 Utilize the Housing for All Planning Tool (HAPT) to establish the housing needs by income level for communities across the County. Each jurisdiction is responsible for meeting the housing needs at each income level.

H 4.2 Support the development of a range of permanent affordable housing options through small demonstration projects, administration of rental assistance, and supportive housing.

H 4.3 Ensure publicly funded, affordable housing is located in appropriate locations where infrastructure, public transit, and community services are readily accessible, planned in the near future, or are included as a part of a new development.

H 4.4 Prioritize the use of existing surplus and buildable public land owned by Island County and other public agencies to support affordable or subsidized housing.

H 4.5 Implement incentives, including reducing or eliminating fees and density bonuses, for affordable housing projects within non-municipal urban growth areas and mixed use LAMIRDs, including affordable housing projects on land owned by religious organizations.

H 4.6 Ensure coordination between the policies addressed in the Comprehensive Plan and those outlined in Island County’s Homeless Housing Plan.

H 4.7 Collaborate with municipal jurisdictions to develop mutual policies and agreements that facilitate the siting and subsequent annexation of affordable housing in unincorporated UGAs.

H 4.8 Incentivize churches and nonprofits in developing and providing affordable housing on their land including the infrastructure needed to support the housing.

Goal 5 Collaborate with other jurisdictions and housing organizations to address county-wide housing issues.

H 5.1 Actively convene committees to coordinate county-wide housing issues and include representatives from under served communities and individuals who have previously experienced homelessness or housing insecurity.

H 5.2 Implement a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program in conjunction with municipal jurisdictions, that allows higher densities within city boundaries, urban growth areas, mixed-use LAMIRDs and evaluate opportunities for using the TDR program to preserve existing affordable housing.

H 5.3 Continue to build maintain partnerships and support collaboration with housing groups, local industries, major employers, and different groups including nonprofit, faith-based, public, and private interests in ongoing efforts to fund and sustain existing affordable housing projects in Island County.

H 5.4 Support collaboration between private developers, public agencies, religious organizations, and non-profit organizations so that a variety of housing options are dispersed throughout the county and develop these partnerships to collaboratively advocate for more financial resources from the federal and state government for subsidized and affordable housing.

H 5.5 Continue to coordinate with and provide staff support for the Housing Provider Network and other housing-related committees.

H 5.6 Support applications for federal, Low-Income Housing Tax Credits and other available incentives for the acquisition, rehabilitation, or new constructions of rental housing targeted to lower-income households.

H 5.7 The Board of Island County Commissioners shall consider housing related policy implementation actions as part of the annual work plan review.

NATURAL RESOURCES



Island County Comprehensive Plan

2025 Periodic Update

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NATURAL RESOURCES

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The Natural Resource Element covers several important issues, such as the protection of agricultural land and forest areas, open space corridors, property rights, wetlands, groundwater, rural character, and wildlife habitat protection. The need for conservation, restoration, and protection of natural resources increases as the County population continues to grow.

The balance between natural resource protection and development influences the economic condition of Island County. Natural resources have the potential to create jobs, provide recreational opportunities, enhance property values, attract customers and revenue to local businesses, increase government revenues, decrease the cost of community services, and improve the local quality of life.

Since the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, Island County has advanced several efforts to strengthen natural resource management. Notably the County completed an update to its Critical Areas Ordinance in 2019, conducted a Sea Level Rise Study in 2020, updated its Shoreline Master Program in 2025 (pending state approval), and completed a Climate Resiliency Element in 2025. The County will continue to build on this work to proactively protect critical areas and connected habitats, address water conservation, steer growth in ways that minimize risks and vulnerability to our changing climate, and to build environmental resilience.

6.1.1 Definition of Natural Resources

Natural resources are natural materials, substances, processes or organisms that people and wildlife depend on for clean air, clean water, enjoyment, and production of food, agricultural products, timber or the extraction of minerals that can be potentially useful for economic gain. Classically, natural resources were thought of as minerals, fossil fuels, timber, water, fish, and wildlife. More frequently however, the definition has emphasized natural systems not as resources to be managed, but vital assets that provide ecosystem services, recreation, and climate resilience for current and future residents. This element covers natural lands, air quality, mineral lands, critical areas, surface water, and groundwater resources.

6.1.2 Vision for Natural Resources

Natural resource systems should be conserved, restored, and preserved in recognition of the irreplaceable character of such resources, and of their importance to the quality of life of residents, visitors, neighboring Tribes, and the future generations of Island County. Steps should be taken to protect natural resources to achieve no net loss of ecological functions, while enhancing enjoyment and appreciation to meet human needs throughout the county.

6.2 CRITICAL AREAS

Critical areas are lands that are protected to maintain important and sensitive ecological functions as well as areas that present increased risks to persons and property in development. However, a property owner cannot be deprived of a reasonable use and the enjoyment of lands on which critical areas and their associated buffers, if any, are located.

As defined in WAC 365-196-485(2), critical areas include:

- Wetlands
- Areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water

- Fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas
- Frequently flooded areas
- Geologically hazardous areas

Prior to adoption of the 1984 Island County Code, many critical areas in Island County had been disturbed by past development, logging, or other human activity. Some critical areas are essentially in pristine condition, having recovered from logging or other activity which has occurred on or near them in the last century or so. Many of the county's most valuable critical areas lie in undeveloped rural areas and in resource lands.

The Critical Areas maps (located on the Island County Mapping System ICGeo Map), provide a generalized location based on authoritative studies, e.g., maps generated by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Priority Habitats and Species Program; occurrence maps generated by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Natural Heritage Program; United States Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) National Wetland Inventory maps; DNR Water Type maps; maps of frequently flooded areas prepared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency; and maps of identified wetlands prepared for the County in 1990 or completed by qualified consultants. The County updated its maps of the shoreline areas to include commercial and recreational shellfish areas; additional updates may include kelp and eelgrass beds; and herring and smelt spawning areas. These maps are intended for informational (but not necessarily regulatory) purposes. Detailed on-site inspections may be required to determine if an area meets the designation and classification criteria. These studies may take precedence over generalized mapping.

The County is responsible for updating and maintaining the maps on a regular basis, as additional information is developed through studies and subsequent determinations. Considerable progress can be made toward protecting some types of critical areas simply by making the information in these maps and other materials readily accessible to current and potential landowners, development interests, and the public. Island County will make the location of wetlands, streams, and steep slopes publicly available but will not disclose the location of sensitive species when disclosure might harm those species or their habitat.

Effective enforcement is an important component of any critical areas protection program. The enforcement action and severity of any penalty must be proportionate to the nature and circumstances of the violation, and the damage or risk to private and public resources. When wetlands or fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas are damaged in violation of the law, restoration to at least pre-existing functional condition will be required.

6.2.1 Wetlands

Island County contains a wide variety of wetlands, from salmonberry and alder swamps to lush bogs, thriving estuarine marshes, and broad wet meadows. Often these wetlands are fragile ecosystems that may serve important and beneficial functions. Wetlands can assist in reducing flooding, erosion, siltation, and ground and surface water pollution; help maintain ground water recharge and surface water flows; and provide wildlife, plant, and fisheries habitats. Wetlands harbor plant and animal species with recreational, economic, and cultural importance. Many wetlands are essential components of the highly valued visual landscape of Island County.

Wetlands historically have been treated as wasted land, to be reclaimed through draining and filling. Wetlands destruction, or impairment of wetland functions, may result in increased public and private costs or property losses, through effects such as increased flooding or water quality degradation. Only in recent decades has the economic, environmental, and cultural impacts of wetlands destruction been recognized and efforts made to reduce the loss of wetland functions and values.

Designation of wetlands and regulation of wetlands are separate issues. The economic, environmental, and cultural values that communities place on wetlands should be used to determine wetlands policy and regulation. Wetlands classification or ratings systems are used to define what regulatory standards apply and to establish priorities for non-regulatory mechanisms, such as acquisition and restoration.

Wetland functions typically refer to physical, chemical, and biological processes. Some functions, such as water quality and purification, flood attenuation, sediment trapping, and wildlife habitat, can be quantified accurately depending on level of study. Wetland values (aesthetic, cultural, educational, or recreational) generally refer to the importance or worth that society places on wetlands. As values are by nature subjective, they are difficult to measure.

Island County has had wetland regulations in place since 1984. During public review, these regulations were determined to have met the GMA's substantive and procedural requirements. Wetlands within the shoreline jurisdiction are regulated by the Shoreline Master Program, rather than the Critical Areas Ordinance. In addition, the County should require the use of best management practices for existing agricultural uses and should not exempt new agricultural uses. The County may also wish to allow certain low impact uses within wetland buffers and allow installation of infrastructure where there is no practical alternative location.

6.2.2 Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas

The natural history of Island County, from the region's volcanic origins to its repeated glacial advances and retreats punctuated by massive post-glacial flooding, has left a geologic hodgepodge of sands, gravels, fine silts, and sediments; cemented till ("hardpan"); clays; and metamorphic rock formations.

Many of these formations bear accessible groundwater and can supply groundwater for the county's domestic, agricultural, recreational, and commercial/industrial needs.

Most of Island County depends on groundwater, 73 percent of residents rely on groundwater as a drinking water source. All county residents share responsibility to keep our groundwater resources safe. Some areas rely on surface water, such as the City of Oak Harbor, Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, and an outlying community near Deception Pass, which all rely on Skagit River water piped to the city via the Anacortes treatment plant.

General areas of low, medium, and high recharge potential have been mapped based on surficial geology county-wide (Map 6D). While providing useful and valuable information about recharge potential over wide areas, the mapping scale and complexity of the underlying geology make it impractical to apply the information to site-specific land uses.

Rainfall infiltration from the surface to water-bearing layers is currently the only source for renewing the county's groundwater supplies. There is no evidence of any naturally occurring underground hydraulic connection to mainland sources of groundwater. Continued infiltration of fresh water can exclude intruding sea water from subsurface water-bearing layers, thereby keeping the sea water at bay.

(This topic is discussed in-depth below, see section 6.3)

6.2.2.1 Groundwater Data and Recharge

Comprehensive data collection and management efforts are the basis for better management of Island County's groundwater resources. Island County Public Health compiles the best available science pertaining to groundwater wells and groundwater quality from the following sources:

- Island County Public Health Seawater Intrusion and Long-Term Groundwater Monitoring
- Washington Department of Ecology Well Report and Environmental Information Management System
- Washington Department of Health Office of Drinking Water Sentry and Source Water Assessment Program
- United States Geological Survey
- Public Water Systems
- Individual Well Owners

Island County conducts long term monitoring of groundwater and seawater intrusion and maintains a hydrogeology dashboard with information from multiple data sources for water quality and quantity throughout the county. Data collection and sharing helps protect our aquifers and drinking water supplies by informing and engaging the public in taking an active role in helping protect our groundwater resources.

6.2.3 Fish & Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas

Island County supports a variety of fish and wildlife species thanks to our mix of forests, prairies, and marine waters. The GMA requires counties to designate and protect Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas (FWHCAs), areas vital for maintaining species populations. These include habitats for species listed as endangered, threatened, or sensitive, priority habitats identified by the state, and areas of local importance.

FWHCAs in Island County include streams and small seasonal creeks, lakes and ponds, wetlands, marine nearshore habitats, upland wildlife areas, and habitat corridors. Since 2016, the County has improved its mapping and information for these areas. For example, the County's critical areas map now incorporates data from state and federal agencies, including the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife's Priority Habitats and Species (PHS) database, the National Wetlands Inventory, and local surveys of marine resources. These marine habitats are crucial for the marine food web and have been recognized as priorities for conservation. Eelgrass beds, for instance, provide nursery areas for juvenile fish and forage species.

6.2.4 Frequently Flooded Areas

Although lacking major river systems that occur in mainland Western Washington, Island County is not immune to flood threats. Flooding generally occurs in the winter during intense storms, combined with high tides. Wind-generated waves frequently run up the beach and overtop many shore protection structures, damaging structures along the shoreline and flooding inland areas. Wave-tossed driftwood can threaten safety and property. These conditions are likely to be exacerbated by climate related sea level rise.

Flooding that is less violent and severe, but perhaps more frequent, occurs around lakes and other low-lying areas during and following heavy precipitation. Increased rates of runoff have been caused by development, creation of impervious surfaces, channeling of surface water flows, and loss of wetlands and extensive forest vegetative cover, all of which decreases the capacity of upland areas to retain moisture and exacerbating flood problems.

Individual residents, community associations, and diking districts have undertaken local flood protection efforts, including drainage improvements, tide gates, holding ponds, and shore protection structures such as bulkheads and rip-rap. Some of these facilities are maintained by the County.

The County has adopted a Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance (Chapter 14.02A ICC) which provides construction standards for frequently flooded areas, and stormwater regulations with required detention (Chapter 11.03 ICC).

6.2.5 Geologically Hazardous Areas

Although Island County is characterized by a gentler landscape than much of the mountainous and river-torn Puget Sound mainland, the islands have been and continue to be buffeted by geological and climatological forces. Vertical bluffs, ancient landslides, slopes with groundwater seepage, or springs can be found in Island County. Careless development in such areas can lead to loss of life and property, both on-site and on other properties. Development and land disturbing activities within geologically hazardous areas are regulated under Chapters 11.02 and 17.02B ICC.

6.3 GROUNDWATER RESOURCES

6.3.1 Groundwater Overview

The geologic development of Island County has resulted in the reliance on limited sources of groundwater. The physical presence of saltwater surrounding the islands creates threats to groundwater quality which are not experienced in other areas. Typical measures to protect groundwater include ensuring adequate recharge of rainfall and other surface waters and minimizing the threat of pollutants. In Island County, measures must also include careful monitoring of the level of groundwater extraction, to minimize the threat of saltwater intrusion into freshwater aquifers.

In 1979, Island County began work to define the hydrogeology of the islands; determine the chemical quality of groundwater; and identify areas of existing and potential sea water intrusion. These studies have provided detailed information on the hydrogeology of Island County.

In 1982, the Environmental Protection Agency declared Sole Source Aquifer for Whidbey Island and Camano Island. The designation acknowledged Island County's reliance on groundwater as a potable water source for both islands and requires federally funded projects be designed to ensure protection of groundwater resources. The county is in fact served by a multiple aquifer system. The sole source designation refers to the county's reliance on groundwater for drinking water rather than a singular aquifer.

Island County's aquifer system is the critically important water supply for people living outside the general Oak Harbor area. Approximately 73 percent of the county's population relies upon groundwater as a potable water resource. Population growth in rural areas, as well as the continued need for water to support agriculture, has increased groundwater demand proportionally; this is expected to continue in the future. Studies completed to date, including hydrogeologic investigations conducted by local, state and federal agencies, conclude that groundwater supplies are a finite resource in Island County.

6.3.2 Groundwater Resource and Recharge Protection

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires the designation and protection of critical areas, such as aquifer recharge areas. Included in the adopted Ground Water Management Plan are areas identified as having a greater potential for recharge based upon soil type and surficial hydrology. In 1992, Chapter 8.09 ICC was amended to include measures to protect groundwater from surface activities in susceptible areas. All of Island County was considered a recharge area and specific protection measures were determined at the time of application and related to project impacts.

The amendments to Chapter 8.09 ICC in 1992 were based upon the entire county as a critical recharge area formulated from the sole source aquifer designation and adopted groundwater management areas pursuant to Chapter 90.44 RCW. The criteria established in Chapter 8.09 ICC provided the basis for the protection of groundwater resources in critical recharge areas.

A 2002 United States Geological Survey (USGS) Recharge Study provided Island County with invaluable information concerning the local conditions that affect the recharge of precipitation into our aquifer systems. Previously, these areas had not been specifically delineated other than through the application of potential recharge rates based upon superficial geology.

Through the Watershed Planning process, Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas (CARA) have been delineated using the “Guidance Document for the Establishment of CARA Ordinances”, Department of Ecology, 2000.

The following four criteria were used to assess aquifer vulnerability, and maps of each parameter were developed.

1. Depth-to-Water parameter was used to develop the “Depth to Water Susceptibility Rating” map, using data from the Island County hydrogeology database;
2. Recharge parameter was used to develop the “Groundwater Recharge Rate” map, using information from the USGS Deep Percolation Model and Ecology Scoring Options;
3. Soil Permeability parameter was used to develop the “Soil Percolation Rate” map, using information from the Island County Soil Survey; and
4. Surficial Geology parameter was used to develop the “Surficial Geology Susceptibility Rating” map, using data from the Island County hydrogeology database.

The CARA Map shows the sum of the scores from the four individual maps and ranks the County into one of three zones: “limited,” “moderate,” and “high” risk for contamination. The specific risk associated with surface contaminants, then, is based upon the four criteria rather than just surficial geology as in the past. Project actions in areas identified as having an increased risk for groundwater contamination may require a hydrogeologic assessment, as determined by Chapter 8.09 ICC.

Hydrogeologic evaluations are required prior to approval of projects identified by the Health Officer as having a potential for groundwater contamination. Appropriate mitigation measures are imposed as conditions of approval for projects with a potential for impacts to groundwater resources.

Due to the complexity of the aquifer systems underlying Island County, it is difficult, if not impossible, to apply regional determinations of groundwater resource protection and water availability. Given these management limitations, site-specific, project specific evaluations are the best available option. As additional information is collected and analyzed, refinements can be made to the system of identifying critical areas for recharge and groundwater protection.

6.3.3 Seawater Intrusion Protection

In order to prevent seawater from entering a freshwater aquifer, adequate freshwater pressure must be maintained. An aquifer’s susceptibility for seawater intrusion can be evaluated by measuring the distribution of water level elevations. Thus, the relationship between an aquifer’s water level elevation and its susceptibility to seawater intrusion can be utilized as a planning and resource management tool.

An aquifer that has water level elevations (pressure) significantly above sea level is not at risk for seawater intrusion, while an aquifer that has near sea level water levels is at risk.

Through the Watershed Planning effort, Island County and the Water Resource Advisory Committee collected and analyzed water quality and groundwater elevation data for 378

wells. This information was used to develop county wide water level elevation criteria to define at what elevation is a well at risk to seawater intrusion. These elevations, coupled with chloride data, were then used to define risk categories for the purpose of reviewing land-use proposals to define impact to the resource.

Pursuant to Chapter 8.09 ICC, hydrogeologic evaluations are required prior to approval of projects identified by the Health Officer as having a potential for causing, inducing, or contributing to seawater intrusion (ICC 8.09.099). Appropriate mitigation measures are imposed as conditions of approval for projects with a potential for impacts to groundwater resources. Additionally, public water systems are required to collect groundwater chemistry indicators of seawater intrusion in areas defined as being at increased risks to intrusion.

6.4 NATURAL LANDS

6.4.1 Natural Lands Overview

Island County has chosen to include information on the protection of natural lands in its Comprehensive Plan as a result of strong interest in this issue expressed by county residents. The protection and conservation of natural lands is important for the environment, is aesthetically beneficial, and benefits the economy of Island County.

The conservation or protection of natural lands is an important strategy that can also help to maintain the rural character of much of Island County. Generally, large expanses of open spaces, interspersed with forest lands and working agricultural landscapes, are important elements of what it makes it special to live in Island County.

State law directs that local governments designate lands as critical areas, open space corridors, and for public purposes. Outside of these specific mandates, the decision to preserve natural lands is not mandated by the GMA or any other state or federal regulation. Rather, the decision lies with the determination of the citizens of Island County to preserve their quality of life by identifying and protecting those natural elements of the landscape which contribute to the scenic and open character of the community.

Many agencies are involved in the protection of natural lands throughout the county, including the federal government, the State of Washington, Island County, the Town of Coupeville, the City of Oak Harbor, and the City of Langley, as well as non-profits, private citizens, and Tribes. The conservation of natural lands can be accomplished in many ways, from regulation to tax incentives to land use ordinances. In all cases, the preferred method of conservation should include the voluntary participation of the property owner. When conservation occurs through land use regulation, efforts must be made to ensure that the owner is left with a reasonable use of the property.

The development and implementation of protection strategies for natural lands rely heavily upon community values. The protection of these natural assets is essential to the continued high quality of life of county residents. These assets are also important to the quality of the experience enjoyed by visitors to this special place.

6.4.2 Definition Of Natural Lands

Natural lands include any land area whose preservation in its natural or existing state would conserve or enhance natural, scenic, or cultural resources; protect surface water or groundwater quality and supplies; promote the conservation of soils, wetlands, beaches, or tidal marshes; enhance the value to the public of abutting or neighboring parks, forests, wildlife preserves, nature reservations, or other open spaces; enhance recreation opportunities; preserve historic sites; preserve working agricultural landscapes; or preserve visual quality or scenic vistas along transportation corridors.

Examples of natural lands may include, but are not limited to, forests and watersheds, agricultural lands, wetlands, significant wildlife habitats (including corridors important for wildlife movement or migration), complex shoreline systems (including lagoons, saltwater tidal flats, marshes, and accretion beaches), and conservation areas or reserves which have the capacity to support complex biological communities or ecosystems.

The terms ‘natural lands’ and ‘open space’ are often used interchangeably by the public. While ‘open space’ is a generic term which may be applied to any parcel of undeveloped land, ‘natural lands’ may also include lands which may contain some development activity or are “worked” (such as agricultural and forestry uses), but which promote values consistent with environmental conservation. Definitions of different types of natural lands can and quite often overlap and should not be confused with the definition of Natural Resource lands as defined in WAC 365-196-480.

6.4.3 Natural Lands Typology

Not all natural lands will have equal value or serve the same ecological functions. Different types of natural lands will benefit from varying types of conservation or protection. Policies reflecting the values of the community will help to determine the types of sites to be protected or conserved, and the level of protection desired.

6.4.3.1 Agriculture

These land types have high visual value as they create a sense of ‘openness’ in rural areas. Unlike the more traditional definition of natural lands, agricultural areas experience a higher degree of human intrusion as crops are harvested. However, these lands are recognized as an important and limited resource which can provide a community with food security as well as environmental and economic value. Today’s land use decisions can greatly affect future agricultural production capabilities. The need to preserve productive farmland is extremely important for future generations.

In addition to agriculture’s historic and economic role, vast expanses of farmland provide scenic open spaces, which contribute to the overall health and welfare of residents and help to promote tourism.

As development occurs, the pressure to convert agricultural land to other, more intensive land uses increases significantly. Displacement can occur as agricultural areas become more urbanized, and as uses change. Increased development near farmland can impact water availability for farmers. Loss of agricultural lands affects the whole community. Many strategies may be employed to promote the goal of agricultural land preservation. Among those strategies are:

- ‘Right-to-farm’ regulations which discourage the infringement of non-agricultural land uses in agricultural areas;
- Land use policies and related strategies which promote value-added activities such as the processing of agricultural products, and which recognize the diverse nature of land uses necessary for agriculture to succeed;
- Property tax policies which do not penalize farmers when land values rise.

6.4.3.2 Forestry

Unlike agricultural activities, the harvesting of timber crops is perceived to have a greater impact upon the land and to the surrounding community. Some of the reasons for the differing impacts are the following:

- The life cycle of a timber harvest can take more than a generation, people come to view wooded areas as a more permanent part of the local landscape;

- The harvesting of timber can create significantly more noise than the harvest of more traditional crops;
- The weight of logging trucks can significantly degrade pavements;
- Wooded areas can provide significant and sometimes critical habitat for wildlife;
- Trees improve air quality by absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen in significant quantities;
- The root systems of trees stabilize soils, and thus help to prevent or minimize soil erosion; and
- Wooded areas can promote groundwater recharge.

However, there are several reasons forestry should be protected in Island County. It is important to the economy of Island County and can offer a local source of lumber to residents thereby reducing transportation impacts on the environment of obtaining lumber elsewhere. Timberlands, although they may be too disruptive for permanent wildlife habitat, provide corridors for wildlife travel and migration. Preserving timber lands also prevents further development which has larger environmental benefits including stormwater retention and carbon sequestration.

6.4.3.3 Wetland Protection

Wetlands provide a variety of functions which are important such as flood prevention, groundwater recharge, and filtering, and they provide critical habitat for plants and wildlife. However, wetlands vary significantly from site to site in terms of their values, functions, and quality. The quality of a wetland must be taken into consideration in determining its priority status for conservation or protection. More detailed information regarding wetlands as critical areas is contained within section 6.2.1.

6.4.3.4 Open Space Corridors

Open space corridors serve important functions for humans, providing walking, jogging, or cycling paths, or scenic vistas. Additionally, they are useful as migratory corridors for wildlife.

The identification of open space corridors within and between cities and Urban Growth Areas (UGA) is of particular importance in meeting the requirements of the GMA. The County's open space map identifies the following open space components:

- Parks lands
- Designated forest lands
- Open space lands
- Whidbey Camano Land Trust lands
- Natural shoreline areas
- Documented Prairie and Oak Woodland Communities
- Critical areas (including streams, wetlands and unstable slopes)
- Mapped trails

Island County will utilize this map to help identify priority areas for future acquisition that will continue to build important open space connections.

6.4.4 Significance of Natural Lands in Island County

Natural land protection and preservation has long been a high priority of residents of Island County. Residents place a high value in open space preservation, protection of watersheds and drinking water sources, natural lands, farmland, and forests threatened by development. Protection of the remaining Natural Lands in Island County continues to be an increasingly important issue for Island County residents.

Table 6-1. Natural Lands/Open Space Summary

	Acres	Parcels
Some Form of Development	64,912	37,448
Open Space Program	23,286	1,617

Although both agriculture and forestry have become a much smaller part of the Island County economy in their own right, the overall importance of natural resource lands to the economic and cultural character of Island County is not easily measured. Rolling farmlands and extensive forested tracts are important components of Island County's rural atmosphere. The rural "feel" that will attract more residents and tourists may depend on the continued existence and maintenance of these lands. In addition to their aesthetic values, these lands also play important roles in air and water quality, climate resilience, food security, and wildlife habitat.

While the aesthetic and environmental benefits of mineral resource lands (such as gravel pits) are not on a level with agricultural and forested lands, extraction of mineral resources is required under the GMA and important to the county's economic stability and diversity.

6.4.4.1 Agricultural Land Conservation

Conserving productive agricultural soils and supporting farming operations as economically viable activity (and as an accepted way of life) is a major challenge in Island County.

Significant efforts have been made, and will continue to be made, to preserve agricultural lands of key aesthetic and historical significance, and where viable farming is continuing, through public purchase of easements or of the land itself. Outside of those areas, farming activities are scattered and in comparatively small blocks. Much of the area which remains in production is not underlain by significant amounts of prime (Class II or III) soils. There are no unique soils in Island County as defined by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service. Farming in Island County typically includes fruits and vegetables, livestock and poultry, forage and grain, and seed production.

In light of the existing pattern of rural development in Island County, the County must find ways to protect farms large and small from increasing development pressures.

Table 6-2. Agricultural Lands

There are 17,038 acres of farmland in Island County, comprising of 377 farms of different sizes. The average farm size is 45 acres, which is down from the historical average of 62 acres.

	Acres	Parcels
Commercial Agriculture Lands	4,316	199
Rural Agriculture Lands	6,651	435
In the Agricultural Tax Program	9,466	545

Table 6-3. Agricultural Economy

	Average Number of People
Employed in Crop Production	102
Employed in Animal Production & Aquaculture	78

Farming in Island County is a \$23 million dollar industry. Of the commercial products produced by Island County farms, dairy and livestock operations tend to be in significantly larger blocks of land under single ownership or management than are vegetable, berry, and seed production areas. In examining the minimum block size under a single management which is feasible for dairy or livestock, however, it appears that farms as small as 40 acres may be economically feasible. Similarly, vegetable, berry, or seed production on blocks of 40 acres or more appears to be economically viable. Micro-farming of vegetables or flowers may occur on significantly smaller tracts.

Given the existing development pressure in the rural areas of the county, there is a long-term need to preserve lands which are in active commercial production, and which have soil quality to support agricultural production. Reviewing the blocks of land being actively farmed under single management in Island County disclosed that many of those farms are not underlain by 50 percent or more prime soils. Some commercial farms with relatively little prime soil have been in operation in Island County for many years. It is assumed, however, that where the farm does not have prime soils, the current status of the farm as a commercial operation may be more a result of the skill or commitment of the current operator than the long-term value of the land as a land base for commercial agriculture. As a result, the only farms that should be put in Commercial Agriculture designation automatically are those which meet three criteria:

1. The farm is a block of at least 40 acres in size, owned by a single farmer.
2. Fifty percent or more of the block is underlain by prime soils.
3. The block is in active commercial agricultural use.

Farms which do not qualify for designation as Commercial Agriculture because of soil quality may volunteer to be put in that classification. All other parcels of 20 acres or more, within the agricultural tax program should be treated as agricultural lands of local importance and designated Rural Agriculture.

Small farms are gaining increased importance in the county. Specialty crops may be cultivated on lands of a size and with underlying soils not normally associated with larger scale farming. It is important that the County recognize the changing trends of farming in the county and provide for the appropriate land use regulations and economic and services support for them to prosper.

Incompatible development adjacent to agricultural lands increases pressures to convert these properties. Pressure comes from demands to suppress the “nuisance” factors created by farms, such as prohibiting livestock raising or limiting the storage and use of fertilizers. Right-to-farm measures must be adopted to enhance the farm economy. Under GMA, the County must ensure that uses on lands adjacent to resource lands do not interfere with continuing well-managed agricultural activities on resource lands. This may be accomplished by establishing a rural zoning density surrounding the resource lands; and, as required per RCW 36.70A.060, adopting regulations requiring that all users of new development within 300 feet of the property be notified of the proximity and impacts of the ongoing agricultural activities.

Rising taxation on adjacent land further accelerates conversion pressures. Farmland can be preserved as agricultural open space by implementing an array of programs, such as agricultural land zoning and placing the property in current use tax programs.

6.4.4.2 Forest Lands Conservation

Forests in Island County are an important natural resource to landowners and local citizens. Forest lands contribute to the rural character, protect watershed functions, and provide wildlife habitat. Management of forest lands for timber production constitutes a valued element in the county’s renewable natural and economic resource base, although it forms a small part of the local economy. Development pressure and widespread antipathy to commercial forest practices threatens the viability of forestry as a self-sustaining local industry.

The remaining timber land in Island County is in small and scattered blocks. That is significantly smaller than the minimum block sizes established by several Western Washington counties for forest lands of long-term commercial significance and is much smaller than the blocks of commercial significance which exist in the counties of Western Washington where the forest industry is active.

There are few industrial foresters left in Island County. The remaining forest landowners in Island County are non-industrial private forest owners. Although a few of those owners actively manage their lands to increase growth and for continuous production, much of the land is subject to minimal management. There are currently no timber converting facilities in Island County. All commercial timber which is harvested in the county is trucked off the islands for processing; much of the timber felled in Island County is converted to wood products and/or sold as firewood locally.

Table 6-4. Forestry Lands and Timber Production

	Acres	Parcels
In the Timber Tax Program	12,298	856
Owned by DNR	399.36	10

While not all of these lands are being actively managed for industrial timber production, it is likely that all forest lands which do meet the definition are in a timber tax program.

One of the greatest obstacles to timber lands management is pressure from adjacent land uses. There are very few, if any, forest lands that are not adjacent to or within sight of existing plats, urban areas, or major transportation routes, some of which are scenic highways. Changing attitudes towards resource use have brought intense political pressure on elected officials to limit the aesthetic and environmental consequences of timber management practices.

6.4.5 Identification and Management of Natural Lands

Early identification of important natural land areas, and the use of proven management and environmental protection techniques can help to maintain and improve environmental quality by preventing unwanted environmental consequences. This approach is both environmentally and fiscally responsible, as the costs associated with remediation or correction of environmental problems can be significantly higher than costs for prevention.

Identification of natural lands should also include land within urban areas, such as towns, cities, UGAs, and Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Development (LAMIRDs). Efforts should be made to designate natural lands in sizes and patterns which will maximize their benefit to the community and environment. Natural lands within urban areas may also perform the valuable function of acting as a buffer between differing land uses.

The ownership and extent of protection afforded to natural lands within the county is as varied as the many different types of natural lands which exist. Publicly owned lands which may qualify as natural lands may be owned or managed by State or Federal agencies, local governments, special purpose districts, or a combination of interest groups. Most recently, lands acquired through “joint venture” arrangements have protected significant sites by combining the resources of both public and private entities. The success of these efforts will determine the model for many future acquisitions.

6.4.6 Analysis

6.4.6.1 Incentives

6.4.6.1.1 Tax Benefit Programs

State law permits counties to offer reductions in property taxes as an incentive in exchange for agreements to conserve or protect farmlands, forest lands, or open space.

On a countywide scale this occurs as tax shift, rather than a reduction, because the same total amount of taxes are collected, but the burden is instead shifted to other property owners. Island County has offered these incentives for many years, and the County Assessor’s office has developed a record of success in implementing these programs. Currently, the County implements a Public Benefit Rating System (PBRs) program to incentivize private property owners to conserve natural lands (Chapter 3.40 ICC). It is implemented by evaluating an applicant’s property based on guidelines established by the County. A larger reduction is offered depending on the type of land conserved and its relative benefit to the public and the environment. When it comes to the tax reduction programs offered to forestry, the reduction is based on soil type (RCW 84.33 and WAC 458-40-540). The reduction for agriculture is a bit more complicated; while most counties use a Farm Advisory Board to value the land, Island County does not have a Farm Advisory Board (RCW 84.34). Instead, the County uses long established values based on which region of the county the property is located.

The advantage to tax benefit programs is that they do not require the appropriation of new funds by the County to protect unique or desirable natural lands. In addition, the PBRs approach permits the County to focus on the protection of their identified priorities, without providing a larger benefit than needed to a less important property. One of the most important benefits to a PBRs program is that it reflects the values and priorities established by county residents.

6.4.6.1.2 Purchase or Donation of Easements Or Other Rights

In some cases, a valuable portion or characteristic of a site can be protected without limiting the use or development of the remainder of the parcel. In these instances, the purchase or acquisition of an easement, a conservation restriction, or a development right may provide the full level of protection needed or desired by the public. Because the conveyance of an easement or any other interest in a parcel of land will affect the value of the property, the property owner is likely to also experience a reduction in property taxes. Also, the conveyance of an interest in land by donation may result in an income tax deduction for the property owner.

The advantage to this approach is that only a portion of the value of a property is acquired, thus resulting in a lower public cost than the outright purchase of a complete interest in the property. Advantages to the property owners is that they are left with a valuable remainder of the property that can still be used, as well as possible property or income tax reductions.

6.4.6.2 Funding Strategies

Many approaches to conserve or protect natural lands will require the expenditure of public funds. Traditionally, grants from State or Federal agencies have been sought and utilized for this purpose. However, with increasing competition for these scarce resources, exclusive reliance on these types of funding sources will not succeed. In an era of limited public resources, Island County will need creative approaches to locating the needed funds.

6.4.6.2.1 Impact or Mitigation Fees

The authority to impose fees to mitigate the impact of development is discussed under regulatory approaches. Once collected, such funds may only be used in a manner which will mitigate the identified impact. If funds are collected to replace lost open space or recreational opportunities, they may then be used as part of an overall funding strategy to acquire, preserve, or protect natural lands.

6.4.6.2.2 Grants or Loans From Foundations

Many foundations are dedicated to environmental stewardship, including the conservation of natural lands. Foundations may be established as independent organizations, or as a charitable extension of a corporation. In addition to foundations or charitable trusts, corporations will often provide direct funding for specific projects if such projects can benefit them or the communities in which they do business.

6.4.6.2.3 Dedicated Revenues from Local Taxes

Subject to the approval of voters, the County may authorize the use of local real estate taxes to pay for the costs associated with acquiring or conserving natural lands. Some examples of uses of local taxes for this purpose are:

- Conservation Futures Fund
- Real Estate Excise Tax (REET)
- The Real Estate Environmental Endowment (TREE)
- Bonds
- Voter-approved Property Tax Levy

6.4.6.3 Collaborative Approaches

Island County benefits from the presence of a diverse array of citizens, organizations, and agencies who are dedicated to the conservation, preservation, or protection of natural lands. These organizations include park districts, port districts, private land trusts, and government agencies on all levels. It is often the case that no single agency or organization has the resources to protect important natural lands. It is thus becoming increasingly important for individuals and groups with similar interests to work together to pool their resources and protect those qualities that they determine to be important.

6.4.7 Continued Public Involvement and Education

To implement this plan, support from the public is essential. Public involvement should be encouraged throughout this plan's implementation. The County should encourage dialogue among its citizens, and it should make every effort to enhance communication between individuals, interest groups, special districts, and governments at all levels.

Public involvement and support starts with education. In order for these strategies to succeed, they must be accepted and actively supported by the citizens of the county. Experience in many jurisdictions throughout the country has shown that such support will be given only when the public understands the issues.

The most traditional form of public involvement has been through formal public hearings. Such hearings serve a useful purpose, but they are most helpful in educating and informing the public. One major drawback to the use of public hearings is that the format of the hearing often results in a rigid setting between citizens and public officials which doesn't allow for adequate dialogue. Less formal meetings that encourage a cooperative exchange of information are almost always more productive. Other educational methods include speaking before interest groups and local service clubs, disseminating information through the internet, and providing informational materials to the public in easily understood formats.

6.5 MINERAL LANDS

The GMA calls for long-term conservation of mineral resource lands to ensure current and future supplies of sand, gravel, and non-renewable minerals. These lands must be protected from urban encroachment while ensuring environmental protection through appropriate siting, operation, and reclamation standards. Mineral resource lands include those lands devoted primarily to mineral extraction or that have a known potential for long-term commercial extraction of minerals. Minerals are defined as sand, gravel, and valuable metallic substances.

Surface mining is considered a zoning overlay, applicable within Agricultural, Forestry, and Rural Lands. This precludes unnecessary rezoning of land for mining and related mine activities and maintains the Comprehensive Plan's long-term land use vision beyond surface mining. However, as with agricultural and forest lands, GMA requires the County to establish designation and protective criteria for these lands.

6.5.1 Existing Mineral Lands

While designation of these sites is fairly straightforward, the issue of protecting them is more difficult. Existing sites have, however, already been permitted. Thus, the conditions under which they operate have been established and are vested. Surrounding uses of existing sites have had fair warning of the existence of the site. Therefore, it is not clear that additional restrictions on surrounding lands are necessary. The County requires that all plats, short plats, development permits, and building permits issued for development activities on, or within three hundred feet of existing mineral lands contain a notice that the subject property is within or near designated 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.

6.5.2 Potential Mineral Lands

Although the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) has identified broad areas of potential gravel deposits in Island County, it is unreasonable to designate those entire areas. They are in large part already developed with small lot sizes and incompatible land uses for any new mineral extraction. The USGS designation also provides no assurance that the land in fact has gravel under it, how deep such gravel deposits may be, or whether any gravel, if it exists, is present in commercial quantities.

Thus, restricting the use of land which may be in large enough undeveloped parcels to provide the ability to permit a new mineral extraction site, based on the USGS study, is unreasonable, because it is little more than speculative to suggest that the land has "potential" for mineral development. The County will revisit the issue of designation of potential mineral sites at such time as it has information upon which to make a reasonable judgment about designation of potential sites. For now, a permitting system and land use standards for surface mining that allows new proposals to be considered, on a case-by-case basis, is the best interim course of action available to the County.

6.6 GOALS AND POLICIES

Goal 1 Safeguard the natural environment as an integrated system where the land, water, and air resources interact creating a healthy and resilient environment for all life on the islands.

NR 1.1 Include the best available science in developing policies and development regulations to protect the ecosystem functions and values of critical areas to ensure no net loss and give special consideration to conservation or protection measures necessary to preserve or enhance anadromous fisheries.

NR 1.2 Preserve Island County's environmental quality in pursuit of environmental justice and health equity through the careful use of land, water, and air resources.

NR 1.2.1 Extraction of mineral resources must avoid to the greatest extent feasible detrimental effects to the environment.

NR 1.2.2 Prioritize and incentivize infilling of developed lands, Urban Growth Areas, clustering, and areas of more intensive rural development to provide public facilities and services in the most efficient manner, as laid out in the Land Use Element.

NR 1.2.3 Require site planning principles that make green infrastructure and Low Impact Development (LID) practices the preferred and commonly used approach to site development to promote stormwater infiltration, aquifer recharge, and reduce non-point source pollution.

NR 1.3 Conserve energy by incentivizing efficient energy consumption, reduction of waste, reduced emissions, and efficient land use management.

NR 1.3.1 Provide guidance and education in employing energy conservation practices and the use of renewable energy technologies to improve climate resilience.

NR 1.3.1.1 Encourage easy to access community facilities for reuse, recycling, and composting.

NR 1.3.1.2 Allow for reuse of water, provided treatment design meets local and state public health standards.

NR 1.3.2 Incentivize developments and structures with energy and/or water conservation technologies through density credits, waiving of permit fees, and bonuses for implementation of conservation practices in development.

NR 1.4 Conserve and enhance a diverse network of natural lands and open spaces for public benefit and wildlife.

NR 1.5 Incentivize innovative conservation methods to permanently protect high-priority natural areas.

NR 1.6 Preserve a high level of air quality by limiting outdoor burning and reducing the use of fossil fuels.

NR 1.6.1 Encourage alternatives to outdoor burning from clearing, grading, and logging activities, and incentivize having materials chipped on site.

NR 1.6.2 Incentivize conversion to alternative fuels and energy sources and tree planting to improve air quality.

Goal 2 Protect, preserve, and enhance wetlands to offset impacts and to achieve no net loss of wetland functions.

NR 2.1 Avoid land development that causes loss of wetland functions and values. When there is no reasonable alternative, minimize and compensate adverse impacts to wetland functions.

NR 2.2 Prioritize onsite mitigation projects that add to existing wetlands or increase functions and values of degraded wetlands followed by in-watershed mitigation.

NR 2.3 Prohibit alteration of land that results in degradation of wetlands, except for maintenance of existing public use, road, or utility crossings that are the least environmentally damaging practical alternative.

NR 2.4 Improve ecological connectivity between critical areas by allowing increased flexibility in the application of buffers, to include buffer averaging, protection of non-buffer areas via conservation easements, density and/or tax incentives, site design, and other techniques.

NR 2.5 Consider economic, environmental, and cultural costs when evaluating proposals for wetland buffer alterations, and recognize instances where development or alteration within or adjacent to wetland buffers is acceptable.

NR 2.6 Allow reasonable use of a property, provided all wetlands functions are evaluated, the least impactful alternative is pursued, and degraded functions are mitigated to ensure no net loss of ecological function.

NR 2.7 Require implementation of Island County's best management practices (ICC 17.02B.310.B.7) for existing agricultural activities.

Goal 3

Protect Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas to provide for biodiversity, aquatic natural resource productivity, and ecosystem services, such as water infiltration and retention, flood mitigation, climate resiliency, and recreation.

NR 3.1 Utilize specific criteria and processes to nominate, designate, and classify habitats and species of local importance.

NR 3.2 Periodically review and update designations as new information on species viability and habitat needs becomes available.

NR 3.3 Conserve and protect habitat areas such as nests, breeding areas, and nurseries from disturbance during critical life cycle periods to support the survival of protected species.

NR 3.3.1 Enhance habitat areas where the function and value of habitat has been degraded.

NR 3.3.2 Based on the recommendations of Biological Site Assessment or Habitat Management Plan, provide physical buffers or timing restrictions around specific habitat areas used by designated species commensurate to the seasonal use of the area (where that is the case), the sensitivity of the species and habitat, the relative importance of the species and habitat, and the intensity of proposed and actual uses.

NR 3.3.3 Retain, salvage, or re-establish native vegetation using conditions developed during review of a development application.

NR 3.3.4 Identify, map, protect, and encourage corridors and networks of native vegetation between protected habitat areas to minimize isolating and fragmenting designated wildlife habitat. Incentivize natural resource lands supporting uses such as forestry and agriculture into wildlife corridors and networks.

NR 3.3.5 Allow the modification of buffer standards that would result in no net loss of ecological function and values (pursuant to Biological Site Assessment) to promote connectivity of critical areas.

NR 3.3.6 Review State and Federal regulations and guidelines for consistency when making wildlife management and protection decisions.

NR 3.3.7 Develop a watershed-based plan to identify options for improving continuity of natural systems, through restoration, rehabilitation and preservation, including incentives for landowners including flexibility of buffer standards, tax incentives, or density bonuses.

NR 3.4 Support and incentivize voluntary stream, wetland, riparian, and shoreline restoration and preservation efforts.

NR 3.5 Establish a regular update schedule for the County's Monitoring and Adaptive Management element of the Critical Areas Ordinance, based on guidance from WDFW and WA Dept. of Ecology and pursuant to WAC 365-196-660(2)(b) and WAC 365-195-920.

NR 3.6 Require implementation of Island County's best management practices (ICC 17.02B.300.C) for existing agricultural activities.

NR 3.7 Regulation of these areas will take into consideration the ecological functions and values of the area, the potential environmental costs of alterations, the sensitivity of the area to disturbance, and the intensity and potential risks associated with a proposed land use.

NR 3.8 Support recovery of native fish populations based on data provided by, and in coordination with state, tribal, and federal programs.

Goal 4 **Protect public health, safety, and welfare, to minimize public and private losses due to flood conditions in frequently flooded areas.**

NR 4.1 Reduce the potential for physical injury and damage to public and private property from flooding by minimizing impacts of upstream land uses.

NR 4.1.1 Protect natural water storage areas and drainage systems, including wetlands, streams, and lakes, to reduce downstream flooding.

NR 4.1.2 Ensure new or expanded development located within frequently flooded areas complies with the current version of the State Stormwater Manual and is accompanied by appropriate stormwater facilities, such as detention ponds, infiltration facilities, and other measures to maintain rates of runoff at pre-development levels.

NR 4.2 The County's Surface Water Program will continue to implement LID practices to review drainage, flooding, and stormwater run-off in the area and nearby jurisdictions to provide guidance for corrective actions to mitigate or cleanse those discharges that pollute waters of the state.

NR 4.3 Examine alternatives and increase scrutiny for septic systems located in areas that are subject to flooding for any reason, particularly during high runoff rainstorms or coastal flooding events.

NR 4.4 Incentivize community septic systems and the purchasing of land for septic systems located landward of shoreline areas that replace aging single-family infrastructure in flood prone areas.

Goal 5 **Protect the public health, safety, and welfare from threats resulting from incompatible development being sited on or near steep and/or unstable slopes.**

NR 5.1 Minimize damage to life, health, property, and natural resources caused by geological processes.

NR 5.1.1 Require thorough geotechnical investigation of localized conditions during the review of proposed development within areas of steep/unstable slopes.

NR 5.1.2 Encourage, and where appropriate, require use of special engineering, site design, and modified construction practices.

NR 5.1.3 When technology cannot reduce risks to acceptable levels, prohibit activities and land uses which cause or exacerbate existing hazardous geological conditions such as site modification, modification of vegetation, and/or modifications for stormwater management.

NR 5.2 Regulation of these areas will take into consideration the sensitivity of the area to disturbance, and the intensity and potential risks associated with a proposed land use.

Goal 6 **Manage and protect ground water and provide for resource protection through a common goal of non-degradation and replacement for existing and future residents of Island County.**

NR 6.1 Protect the quantity and quality of groundwater resources for existing and future residents of Island County.

NR 6.1.1 Provide or direct residents to incentive programs to encourage participation in water conservation and aquifer recharge area protection programs.

NR 6.1.2 Encourage new development to connect to public water systems in areas of known ground water limitations as determined by the Health Department, unless it can be proven through objective well tests not to diminish water supplies or reduce water quality for existing users.

NR 6.2 Incentivize rainwater capture and reuse of stormwater using integrated stormwater management best practices to protect surface and groundwater quality.

NR 6.3 Educate County residents and businesses about the function and benefits of water conservation.

NR 6.4 Identify and protect critical aquifer recharge areas by utilizing LID site planning principles, water reuse, or alternative storage systems to the greatest extent possible for reducing stormwater runoff.

NR 6.5 Identify, protect, and acquire areas with particular value to groundwater recharge.

NR 6.6 Develop a comprehensive assessment of public groundwater infrastructure in Island County including resiliency needs to support preparedness.

NR 6.6.1 Continue implementing data collection and analysis efforts as recommended in the Ground Water Management Program.

NR 6.6.2 Use site-specific data as it becomes available to determine locations of important recharge areas, areas of limited ground water availability, and areas of particular vulnerability to contamination from surface activities. Maintain, update, and coordinate this data to make the most effective use of the available information.

NR 6.7 Restrict hazardous uses in critical recharge areas and protected wellhead areas, limit impervious surfaces to reduce stormwater runoff, and require LID standards.

NR 6.8 Work with property owners in dense shoreline communities, and/or in areas of high nitrates in groundwater, to develop approaches to mitigate legacy onsite septic issues.

Goal 7 **Ensure water will be preserved for current and future uses by treating it as precious and incentivizing conservation, reducing leakage, reclamation, and reuse.**

NR 7.1 Develop a watershed planning approach through collaboration between Island County DNR, Public Works, and Planning utilizing the Clean Water Utility to support comprehensive watershed plans that can be continually updated to advance priorities.

NR 7.2 Encourage land use patterns and practices such as preservation of forested areas, wetlands, riparian corridors, floodplains, and impervious surface reduction that preserve and restore the integrity of the natural watershed system.

Goal 8 **Conserve a variety of natural lands, in both public and private ownership, for the enjoyment and economic benefit of current and future residents of Island County.**

NR 8.1 Balance public and private interests in land.

NR 8.1.1 Correct imbalances in public policies between open space protection and land development using equity criteria and real costs, both financial and environmental, of subsidizing development.

NR 8.1.2 Only consider divestment in publicly owned open lands and resources if careful analysis shows that they contain little value as public conservation or recreational land.

NR 8.1.3 Reinvest proceeds from the selling or trading of publicly owned open lands and resources towards conservation of land and resources, either directly or through a dedicated fund that yields continuing income streams devoted to land conservation.

NR 8.1.4 Respect property rights when developing regulations and policies around land conservation.

NR 8.1.5 Develop objective criteria to prioritize public expenditures for the acquisition of fee simple or other interests in natural lands recognizing the physical and mental health benefits that natural environments provide to our residents.

NR 8.2 Pursue funding for the acquisition or protection of natural lands in accordance with the Parks and Recreation Element.

Goal 9

Prioritize the protection of natural lands that coincide with other valuable resources, including ecological and agricultural lands.

NR 9.1 Maintain the important ecological functions and values of natural landscapes such as wetlands, stream corridors, shoreline systems, and forests.

NR 9.1.1 Develop land use regulations and strategies such as cluster development and critical area buffer requirements to identify and preserve important natural lands areas located on sites proposed for development.

NR 9.1.2 Prioritize the protection of natural lands that provide multiple benefits, including critical wildlife habitat, aquifer recharge, flood storage, carbon sequestration, and recreational or scenic value.

NR 9.2 Conserve agricultural lands for the continued profitable production of crops, timber, and livestock.

NR 9.2.1 Require properties identified as having prime farmland soils or designated as resource lands comply with WAC 365-190-040 to de-designate lands to non-agricultural uses.

NR 9.2.2 Consider possible strategies for protecting agricultural uses and maintaining the economic viability and sustainability of existing farms.

NR 9.3 Enhance recreational opportunities for county residents.

NR 9.4 Foster enduring voluntary land conservation through incentives, partnerships, new innovative solutions, and government assistance such as income and estate tax benefits, technical assistance grants, and programs to purchase partial land interests.

NR 9.5 Continue implementing the Public Benefit Rating System as a property tax reduction incentive program for property owners to conserve open space and encourage transition of parcels from designated forest to PBRs.

NR 9.6 Maintain existing current use taxation programs for designated forest and agricultural lands.

NR 9.7 Continue an open dialogue between Island County, incorporated jurisdictions, special purpose districts, non-profits, and other interested individuals and organizations working toward the conservation or protection of natural lands.

NR 9.8 Continue to foster active public involvement and partnerships with State and Federal agencies, cities, towns, private non-profit conservation groups, port districts, school districts, tribes, foundations, corporations, and individuals for the purpose of acquiring or protecting natural lands.

NR 9.9 Design and implement education programs to promote the benefits of conserving natural lands, and to introduce available and proposed current use taxation programs.

Goal 10 **Protect scenic, cultural, and historic lands as community assets.**

NR 10.1 Maintain Island County’s natural lands and open space to protect health and welfare, enhance the quality of life, preserve heritage, promote economic vitality, and reduce the burden on government resources.

NR 10.2 Ensure residents have adequate access to open space areas, including land that contains natural areas, beach access, and/or other cultural, and scenic resources.

Goal 11 **Protect existing and ongoing resource management operations and preserving long-term commercial viability of those uses, while encouraging extraction methods that are least damaging to the environment.**

NR 11.1 Implement further measures to support sustainable forest practices.

NR 11.2 Encourage the conservation of lands suitable for forestry and support healthy forest stewardship and management as an activity valued in the County.

NR 11.3 Encourage low intensity uses or cluster development (per WAC 365-196-425) to minimize site clearing and maintain future forestry use options.

NR 11.4 Encourage forestry landowners to retain their lands in timber production and sustainable forest stewardship and to utilize tax incentive programs.

NR 11.5 Support innovative public and private programs that provide foresters incentives to stay on the land.

NR 11.6 Encourage selective clearing and logging, as opposed to clearcutting, especially if forest harvesting is done in the Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve.

NR 11.7 Promote innovative and sustainable forest management that enhances forest health, protects existing tree canopy, and promotes replanting with diverse native and climate friendly species.

NR 11.8 Encourage reforestation of underutilized or degraded lands and agroforestry practices that integrate native and climate friendly trees into the landscape.

NR 11.9 Achieve agricultural preservation through:

NR 11.9.1 Support right to farm and forest measures which protect the right to pursue farm and forestry activities.

NR 11.9.2 Support the continuation of preferential tax programs.

NR 11.10 Encourage an effective stewardship of the environment to conserve and protect Commercial Agriculture lands.

NR 11.10.1 Prevent or correct agricultural practices that produce non-point source pollution of surface and groundwater.

NR 11.10.2 Take measures to minimize adverse impacts of agricultural activities, including agritourism.

NR 11.11 Protect agricultural operations from incompatible uses by using measures including, but not limited to:

NR 11.11.1 Ensuring that uses on adjacent lands do not interfere with continuing agricultural good management practices on resource lands.

NR 11.11.2 Setbacks and buffer strips should be on land within the development unless an alternative is mutually agreed on by adjacent landowners.

NR 11.12 Protect and promote related development such as farmers markets and road-side stands, cooperative marketing, and value-added products, etc.

NR 11.13 Strengthen public disclosure of current adjacent agricultural activities by means of a “right to farm” notice on the deed, area maps, etc.

NR 11.14 Coordinate agricultural land preservation policies with other jurisdictions, special districts and their respective programs.

NR 11.15 Coordinate agricultural land preservation policies with other Countywide Planning Policies through:

NR 11.15.1 Correlating agricultural land preservation policies with Urban Growth Area policies and with public facility and service provision policies to prevent the extension of urban services to areas intended for continued agricultural use;

NR 11.15.2 Ensuring that public facility and service extension, even if not directly serving the agricultural lands, do not stimulate the conversion of agricultural land or make its preservation and protection more difficult.

NR 11.16 In order to assure the conservation of natural resource lands, landowners wishing to request a modification to the classification of their land shall have their proposals reviewed through the comprehensive plan amendment process, consistent with WAC 365-190(10).

NR 11.17 Cooperative agricultural production and marketing will be encouraged.

NR 11.18 Permanently preserve prime farmland while directing growth to appropriate areas.

NR 11.19 Conserve long term mineral lands to ensure the continued supply of sand, gravel, and non-renewable minerals, and their protection from urban encroachment, as well as environmental protection through appropriate siting, operation, reclamation standards and groundwater protection measures.

NR 11.19.1 Assure that the use of lands adjacent to mineral resource lands do not interfere with the continued use, in accordance with best management practices, of lands designated for the extraction of minerals.

NR 11.19.2 Assure that the excavated land will have an ultimate economic use which will complement and preserve the value of adjoining land.

NR 11.19.3 Maintain the contribution of mining and processing operations to the Island County employment base.

NR 11.19.4 Island County will provide for title or plat notification for property owners within 300 feet of an existing approved mining operation.

NR 11.19.5 Regulate surface mining operations to minimize land use conflicts through the conditional use process.

NR 11.19.6 Apply standards which consider noise levels, light pollution, dust, visual screening, transportation impacts, hours of operation, water quality and groundwater protection and consumption, to new and expanding mine operations.

NR 11.20 Allow extractive industries to locate where prime natural resource deposits exist, provided these sites are separated by buffers from existing residential areas and restored for appropriate reuse after removing the resource material.

NR 11.21 Discourage new residential uses from locating near active extractive sites, unless the residential developer provides adequate buffering.

NR 11.22 Operation of new and expanding sites will be regulated by land development standards to ensure proper siting and to minimize environmental impacts during operation.

NR 11.23 Future commercial sites generally should be 10 acres or greater to provide for adequate screening. Future small-scale operations such as borrow pits (where soil, sand, gravel, and other materials are made available) may be less than 10 acres.

NR 11.24 On sites with disturbed areas of three acres or less, site reclamation will be carried out as soon as practical, as phased operations are completed, to prevent erosion and water quality degradation, and to return the site to a natural state. Reclaimed sites can be used for any of the uses permitted in the underlying land use designation.

NR 11.25 Surface mining is not considered to be a permanent use of the land. The land should be utilized consistent with the long-term plans of the community, and mining allowed based upon performance standards.

NR 11.26 Encourage Innovative development concepts to buffer agricultural and mineral resource lands from development.

NR 11.27 Develop guidelines that require cluster developments to be separated from lands designated Mineral Resource by dedicated open space areas or by other measures.

PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN



Island County Comprehensive Plan

2025 Periodic Update

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Parks & Recreation Plan

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Island County’s Parks and Recreation Element was first adopted in 1998. Island County has grown since the last Parks, Recreation & Open Space (PROS) Plan was updated in 2016. The choices that confront Island County at the present time are significant and could alter the character and quality of open space, trail, and park facilities if not adequately planned.

Washington State’s Recreation Conservation Office (RCO) requires Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan be updated at least every 6 years to qualify for certain state and federal park, open space, and trail grants. The Island County 2026-2036 PROS Plan update also provides the Parks & Recreation Chapter of Island County’s Comprehensive Plan which must be updated every 6-8 years for the County to qualify for utility, transportation, and community development grants and funds.

The 2026-2032 PROS Plan identifies Island County’s specific area of focus in managing parks and natural areas for recreation and conservation. It includes policies and strategies for making the best use of existing County resources, including partnering with other providers to ensure that parks and natural areas remain vital assets. The 2026-2032 PROS Plan addresses declining funding, which has made it difficult for the County to adequately care for its resources and sets up a vision for the next 6 to 20 years.

The 2026-2032 PROS Plan synthesizes existing data from a variety of sources to create a County inventory of habitat and recreation lands. It incorporates public involvement findings that were used to identify a vision for County parks, recreation, and conservation that maintain the long-term health of the County and its residents.

Based on this vision, this Comprehensive Plan Element includes specific goals and policies for developing, protecting, and maintaining the Island County park system to address recreation and conservation needs in a fiscally-sound and sustainable manner. This Element provides the County a set of directions to concentrate efforts on core services and improve its land and facility management for current residents and future generations. In doing so, it this Comprehensive Plan Element satisfies requirements of the State’s Growth Management Act as specified in RCW 36.70A.070 and Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) to update parks, recreation, and habitat conservation plans.

7.1.1 Relationship to Other Documents

This Comprehensive Plan Parks and Recreation Element integrates County efforts to provide recreation opportunities and conserve habitat and natural areas within the park land system. For this reason, many goals and policies noted in this Parks and Recreation Element are consistent with the County’s Natural Resources Element. However, the content of this Element does not supersede the information in the Natural Resources Element, which addresses a different context than the parks system.

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires, the Parks and Recreation Element must be consistent with the Capital Facilities Element as it relates to park and recreation facilities. This Element includes estimates of park and recreation demand for a 10-20-year period, an evaluation of facilities and service needs, and an evaluation of intergovernmental coordination opportunities to provide regional approaches for meeting park and recreational demand. This Element is also consistent with other Elements of the County’s Comprehensive Plan, including the Land Use Element, Shoreline Management Element, and the Critical Areas Ordinance.

To be consistent with other County planning documents, the Parks and Recreation Element utilizes data from the County’s Non-Motorized Trails Plan (NMTP) and Shoreline Master Program (SMP). The current update of the Shoreline Master Program (SMP) provides direction on priority shoreline habitat for protection and acquisition, while the Parks and Recreation Element addresses recreation needs for beach and shoreline areas.

PARKS & RECREATION GOALS	
1.	Provide a quality, diverse, and, sustainable system of park land that effectively balances recreation and habitat conservation needs. Island County is dedicated to ensuring that outdoor experiences in natural environments are accessible to all, regardless of abilities.
2.	Provide low impact outdoor recreation opportunities throughout the County increasing access to parks near populated areas such as Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) while emphasizing those that have relatively low impact on the natural environment over others with higher impacts.
3.	Increase public access to the County’s beaches and shoreline areas, creating recreation opportunities that respect the ecological integrity of the shoreline ecosystem.
4.	Protect and conserve priority habitat, natural resources, open space, beach access, and maintain island character. Where appropriate, acquire public access rights or title to lands to improve and expand outdoor recreational opportunities for public enjoyment including ADA facilities, wildlife viewpoints, beach access, trails, boat launchers, and other recreational improvements.
5.	Divest in parks lands that are not conformance with the County’s Comprehensive Plan and stated Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Goals.
6.	Develop stewardship and maintenance programs that cost-effectively protect County assets, emphasize sustainable methods and design, support habitat quality, respond to local needs, and sustain resources for future generations.
7.	Identify, secure, and develop adequate funding sources to develop, operate, maintain, and sustain County parks, habitat, and recreation facilities.
8.	Foster partnerships and county-wide collaboration among park and habitat providers to improve the provision of habitat conservation and recreation services.
9.	Engage Island County residents in the planning and stewardship of parks, trails, and conservation areas, and provide effective communication to improve awareness and support of County services.

7.1.2 Terminology & Definitions

The Parks and Recreation Element uses the following definitions throughout this Element of the Comprehensive Plan:

Active (high impact) Recreation: Activities and/or facilities that generally have a significant impact on the natural environment and/or significant disruption to the quality of the natural character (e.g. increased noise levels). Motorized recreational use (dirt bikes, snowmobiles, etc.), ball fields, playgrounds and tennis courts are examples of active recreation.

Habitat/Habitat Area: The area or natural environment in which an animal, plant, or ecological community normally lives, grows, or is found.

Natural Lands: Any land area where preservation in its existing state would conserve or enhance natural, scenic, or cultural resources; protect surface water or groundwater supplies; promote the conservation of soils, wetlands, beaches, or tidal marshes; enhance the value to the public of abutting or neighboring parks, forests, wildlife preserves, nature reservations, or other open spaces; enhance low impact recreation opportunities; preserve historic sites; preserve working agricultural landscapes; or preserve visual quality or scenic vistas along transportation corridors.

Outdoor Recreation: Leisure activities (or the act of engaging in a leisure activity) that are typically associated with outdoor, natural, or semi-natural settings, such as a beach, forest, grassland, lake, mountain, wetland, or farmland. Hiking, boating, camping, horseback riding, bicycle riding, fishing, hunting, and nature interpretation are examples of outdoor recreation activities.

Park Lands: All the lands managed by Island County which are formally used for or dedicated to outdoor recreation and/or conservation including: 1) Parks; 2) Conservation Areas; and 3) Natural Recreation Areas which can be overlapping terms.

- *Parks:* Any area that has been set aside or is managed for outdoor recreation purposes and, has associated built elements (e.g., boat ramps, picnic tables, playground equipment, or ballfields).
- *Conservation Areas:* Park lands set aside primarily for ecological conservation or environmental protection. Conservation Areas may include fish or wildlife habitat, aquifer recharge areas, significant ecosystems, ecologically critical areas, or agricultural or forest resource lands that may also support outdoor recreational uses, where these uses do not conflict with conservation efforts.
- *Natural Recreation Areas:* Park lands that offer recreational opportunities in a natural setting but do not meet the definition of a Park or Conservation Area including beach access sites without built elements, off-leash dog parks, and forest areas with a greater focus on outdoor recreational use.

Low Impact Recreation: Leisure activities that typically have minimal impact on the natural environment and minimal disruption to the quality of the natural character such as hiking, camping, horseback riding, bicycling, and fishing.

Wildlife Corridor: Connected habitats that link larger patches of habitat, allowing the movement, migration, and dispersal of animals and plants which may not always be linear. Connecting one habitat with another allows species to flow between larger habitat patches, interbreed, genetically mix, and access food and other resources. RCW 36.70A.160 requires identification of open space corridors, that may overlap with wildlife corridors.

7.2 EXISTING PARK SYSTEM

Island County is one of multiple jurisdictions and agencies responsible for managing parks and habitat in the County. To understand the role that Island County plays in providing recreation and conservation services, this section describes the planning area, the jurisdictions involved in park and habitat management, and Island County's park, facility, and habitat inventory.

7.2.1 Jurisdictions Involved in Park/Habitat Management

Island County parks planning requires an understanding of jurisdictional boundaries and responsibilities. The land management jurisdictions in Island County illustrate the context within which Island County operates.

7.1.0.0.1 Federal

The United States Navy (USN) and the National Park Service (NPS) are involved in managing parks and habitat lands in the County. The Naval Air Station Whidbey Island (NASWI) and Ault Field Airstrip on Whidbey Island protect natural acreage and provides recreation opportunities for servicemen and their families. Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve (Ebey's Reserve) in Central Whidbey Island, is managed as a partnership; that includes the National Park Service (NPS) that owns and manages approximately 400 acres within Ebey's Reserve.

7.1.0.0.2 State

The State of Washington supports recreation and habitat conservation through the efforts of several agencies including Washington State Parks, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and Fish & Wildlife (WDFW). Washington State Parks operates 9 state parks in Island County including Deception Pass, Joseph Whidbey, Fort Ebey, Ebey’s Landing, Fort Casey, Keystone, Possession Point, and South Whidbey on Whidbey Island and Cama Beach and Camano Island Park on Camano Island. The Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) manages fishing and shellfish harvest areas. The Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) owns forest lands but does not currently manage any commercial forest land in Island County. DNR does help manage the Naas Natural Area Preserve and maintains some conservation easements and the water around Smith and Minor Island as an aquatic reserve.

7.1.0.0.3 Cities and Towns

Oak Harbor, Langley, and Coupeville also provide parks and natural areas on Whidbey Island. Island County’s largest city, Oak Harbor, has the most park land inventory, Langley and the Town of Coupeville have several small parks and natural areas.

7.1.0.0.4 Park Districts

North Whidbey Park & Recreation District (NWPRD) manages and operates the John Vanderzicht Memorial Pool and the Clover Valley Park. South Whidbey Park & Recreation District (SWPRD) manages the Community Park & Sports Complex, Deer Lake, Lone Lake and Goss Lake public beaches, and the Trustland Trails.

7.1.0.0.5 Port Authorities

The Port of Coupeville operates the Coupeville Wharf and owns Greenbank Farm. The Port of South Whidbey provides several parks, waterfront sites, and a marina. The Port of Mabana does not own park land or operate facilities.

7.1.0.0.6 School Districts

The Coupeville, Oak Harbor, South Whidbey, and Stanwood 205 School Districts each provide recreation and play facilities at local schools.

7.1.0.0.7 Non-Profits

The Nature Conservancy owns a large parcel of protected land in Ebey’s Landing National Historic Reserve which includes trails and natural bluff lands. The Whidbey Camano Land Trust (WCLT) acquires land and conservation easements through donation and purchase to protect coastal areas, wetlands and streams, wildlife habitat, working farmlands, scenic vistas, natural areas, and trails. The Land Trust then provides ongoing stewardship on its lands, or in some cases, transfers ownership to other jurisdictions, such as Island County, with a conservation easement in place to restrict future use.

7.2.2 Park and Habitat Inventory

Island County’s composite open space, trails, and parks inventory includes 220 sites comprising 10,356 acres owned by Island County Parks and Public Works, Oak Harbor, Coupeville, Langley, Washington State Parks & Recreation, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW), NAS Whidbey, North and South Whidbey Park & Recreation Districts, Ports of Coupeville, South Whidbey, and Mabana, Oak Harbor, Coupeville, South Whidbey, and Stanwood/Camano Island School Districts, and nonprofit land trusts.

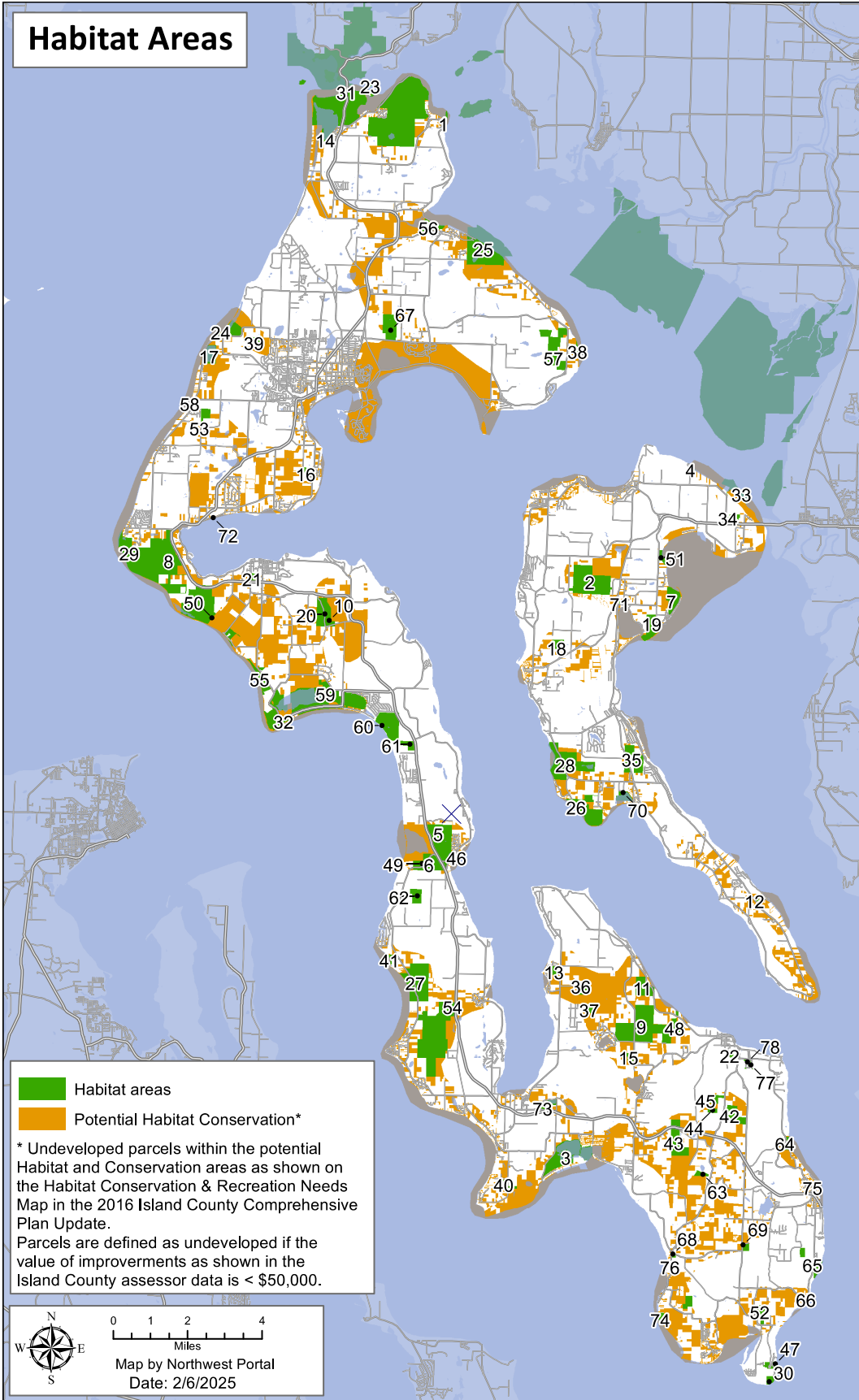
Table 7-1 Parks and habitat land inventory

Island County	Sites	Acres	%
Parks Department	50	2,663.8	25.7%
Public Works	7	735.2	7.1%
Unassigned	40	289.2	2.8%
Other non-parks	6	53.4	0.5%
Subtotal	103	3,741.6	36.1%
Towns and cities			
Coupeville	10	29.8	0.3%
Langley	15	24.9	0.2%
Oak Harbor	28	160.4	1.5%
Subtotal	53	215.1	2.1%
School Districts			
Coupeville	6	50.2	0.5%
Oak Harbor	8	160.4	1.5%
South Whidbey	7	190.7	1.8%
Stanwood-Camano	1	19.9	0.2%
Subtotal	22	421.2	4.1%
Other jurisdictions			
Federal	2	44.4	0.4%
State	23	4,787.3	46.2%
Port Authorities	7	229.4	2.2%
Park & Recreation Districts	3	300.0	2.9%
Nonprofits/private	7	617.2	6.0%
Subtotal	42	5,978.1	57.7%
Total	220	10,356.0	100.0%

State agencies, including Washington State Parks & Recreation, DNR, WDFW own 46.2% of the inventory followed by Island County Parks, Public Works, and unassigned with 36.1%. Towns and cities only own 2.1% and all school districts only 4.1% of the composite inventory.

Consequently, state and county agencies combined provide 82.3% of all open space and park assets and thereby affect most of the open space and park opportunities of interest to county residents and tourists.

Habitat Areas



Habitat areas
Potential Habitat Conservation*

* Undeveloped parcels within the potential Habitat and Conservation areas as shown on the Habitat Conservation & Recreation Needs Map in the 2016 Island County Comprehensive Plan Update.
 Parcels are defined as undeveloped if the value of improvements as shown in the Island County assessor data is < \$50,000.

Map by Northwest Portal
 Date: 2/6/2025

#	Name	Acres
Island County		
1	Ala Spit	17
2	Camano Ridge	410
3	Deer Lagoon	377
4	English Boom	5
5	Greenbank North	199
6	Greenbank South	127
7	Iverson Preserve	115
8	Kettles Trail Area	286
9	Putney Woods	603
10	Rhododendron Park	32
11	Saratoga Woods	119
12	Walter G Hutchinson Park	5
13	Brainers Land Trust	39
14	Ethel Taylor Property	35
15	Hurt Property	26
16	Scenic Heights Trust Land	37
17	Swantown Lake	98
18	Four Springs Lake Nature	50
19	Barnum Point	126
20	Rhododendron Campground	153
Cities		
21	Krueger Open Space	16
22	Langley Well Site Natural Area (Langley)	8
WA State Parks		
23	Strawberry Island State Park	4
24	Joseph Whidbey State Park	109
25	Dugualla State Park Property	586
26	Camano Island State Park	232
27	South Whidbey State Park	360
28	Cama Beach Historical State	379
29	Fort Ebey State Park	696
30	Possession Point State Park	28
31	Deception Pass State Park	4068
32	Fort Casey Historical State Park	437
WDFW		
33	Skagit Bay Estuary Wildlife	10265
34	Camano Island Natural Area	32
WDNR		
35	Elger Bay Trust Land (managed by Island County)	176
36	High Point Trust Land	39
37	Skyline West Trust Land	38
38	Strawberry Point Trust Land	12
39	Swantown Trust Land	40
40	Wahl Road Trust Land	18
41	Smuggler's Cove (co-owner with WCLT)	23
South Whidbey Parks & Recreation District		
42	South Whidbey Community	123
43	Trustland Trails Park	182
44	Maxwelton Trails Park	20
Other Districts or Ports & Trusts		
45	Elementary School Trails Site (South whidbey school district)	47
46	Greenbank Farm (Port of Possession Beach Waterfront Park (Port of South Whidbey	152
47	Park (Port of South Whidbey	27
48	Metcalf Trust	60
The Nature Conservancy		
49	Lake Hancock Preserve	52
50	Nature Conservancy Lands	456
51	Port Susan Bay Preserve	33
Whidbey Camano Land Trust (WCLT)		
Hammon Preserve (Glendale Trust Land)		
52	Trust Land)	54
53	Del Fairfax Forest Preserve	50
54	Trillium Community Forest	739
55	Admiralty Inlet Natural Area	85
56	Dugualla Bay Preserve	68
57	Strawberry Point Preserve	243
58	Morgan Tidelands	6
59	Crockett Lake Preserve	448
60	Keystone Farm and Forest	217
61	St. John Nature Preserve	51
62	Lagoon Point Forest	65
63	Maxwelton Preserve	25
64	Waterman Shoreline Preserve	31
65	Possession Sound Preserve	44
66	Glendale Beach Preserve	5
67	Trust Lands	233
68	Silliman Preserve	8
69	Glendale Wetland Preserve	23
70	Elger Bay Estuary	58
71	Kristoferson Creek	7
72	Lynn Tidelands	2
Whidbey Watersheds		
73	Freeland Wetland Preserve	45
74	Indian Point Preserve (managed by WCLT)	25
75	Old Clinton Creek	2
76	Lower Maxwellton Roadside	1
Private		
77	Highlands Subdivision	3
78	Cedars Subdivision	7

Table 7-2 Existing habitat area acreage by jurisdiction

Island County	Existing habitat area acreage
1 Ala Spit	17
2 Camano Ridge	410
3 Deer Lagoon Preserve	377
4 English Boom	5
5 Greenbank North	199
6 Greenbank South	127
7 Iverson Preserve	115
8 Kettles Trail Area	286
9 Putney Woods	603
10 Rhododendron Park	32
11 Saratoga Woods	119
12 Walter G Hutchinson Park	5
13 Brainers Land Trust	39
14 Ethel Taylor Property	35
15 Hurt Property	26
16 Scenic Heights Land Trust	37
17 Swantown Lake	98
18 Four Springs Lake Preserve	50
19 Barnum Point	126
20 Rhododendron Campground	153
Island County Total	2,859
Cities	
21 Krueger Open Space	16
22 Langley Well Site Natural Area	8
Cities Total	24

Island County	Existing habitat area acreage
Washington State Parks	
23 Strawberry Island State Park	4
24 Joseph Whidbey State Park	109
25 Dugualla State Park Property	586
26 Camano Island State Park	232
27 South Whidbey State Park	360
28 Cama Beach Historical Site	379
29 Fort Ebey State Park	696
30 Possession Point State Park	28
31 Deception Pass State Park	4,068
32 Fort Casey Historical State Park	437
Washington State Parks Total	6,889
WA Dept Fish & Wildlife	
33 Skagit Bay Estuary Wildlife	10,265
34 Camano Island Natural Area	32
WA Dept Fish & Wildlife Total	10,297
WA Dept Natural Resources	
35 Elger Bay Trust Land ⁽¹⁾	176
36 High Point Trust Land	39
37 West Trust Land	38
38 Strawberry Point Trust Land	12
39 Swantown Trust Land	40
40 Wahl Road Trust Land	18
41 Smuggler's Cove ⁽²⁾	23
WA Dept Natural Resources Total	346
Whidbey Parks & Recreation	
42 South Whidbey Community	123
43 Trustland Trails Park	182
44 Maxwelton Trails Park	20
Whidbey Parks & Recreation Total	325

Island County	Existing habitat area acreage
Ports and land trust	
45 Elementary School Trails Site ⁽³⁾	47
46 Greenbank Farm	152
47 Possession Beach Waterfront Park ⁽⁴⁾	27
48 Metcalf Trust	60
Ports and land trust Total	286
Nature Conservancy	
49 Lake Hancock Preserve	52
50 Nature Conservancy Lands	456
51 Port Susan Bay Preserve	33
Nature Conservancy Total	541
Whidbey Camano Land Trust	
52 Hammon Preserve ⁽⁵⁾	54
53 Del Fairfax Forest Preserve	50
54 Trillium Community Forest	739
55 Admiralty Inlet Natural Area	85
56 Dugualla Bay Preserve	68
57 Strawberry Point Preserve	243
58 Morgan Tidelands	6
59 Crockett Laek Preserve	448
60 Keystone Farm and Forest	217
61 St John Nature Preserve	51
62 Lagoon Point Forest	65
63 Maxwelton Preserve	25
64 Waterman Shoreline Preserve	31
65 Possession Sound Preserve	44
66 Glendale Beach Preserve	5
67 Trust Lands	233
68 Silliman Preserve	8
69 Glendale Wetland Preserve	23
70 Elger Bay Estuary	58
71 Kristoferson Creek	7
72 Lynn Tidelands	2
73 Keystone Preserve	216
Whidbey Camano Land Trust Total	2,462

Island County	Existing habitat area acreage
Whidbey watersheds	
74 Freeland Wetland Preserve	45
75 Indian Point Preserve ⁽⁶⁾	25
76 Old Clinton Creek	2
77 Lower Maxwellton Roadside	1
Whidbey watersheds Total	73
Private parks	
78 Highlands Subdivision	3
79 Cedars Subdivision	7
Private parks Total	10
Total	24,122

⁽¹⁾ Managed by Island County

⁽²⁾ Co-owned with WCLT

⁽³⁾ South Whidbey School District

⁽⁴⁾ Port of South Whidbey

⁽⁵⁾ Glendale Trust Land

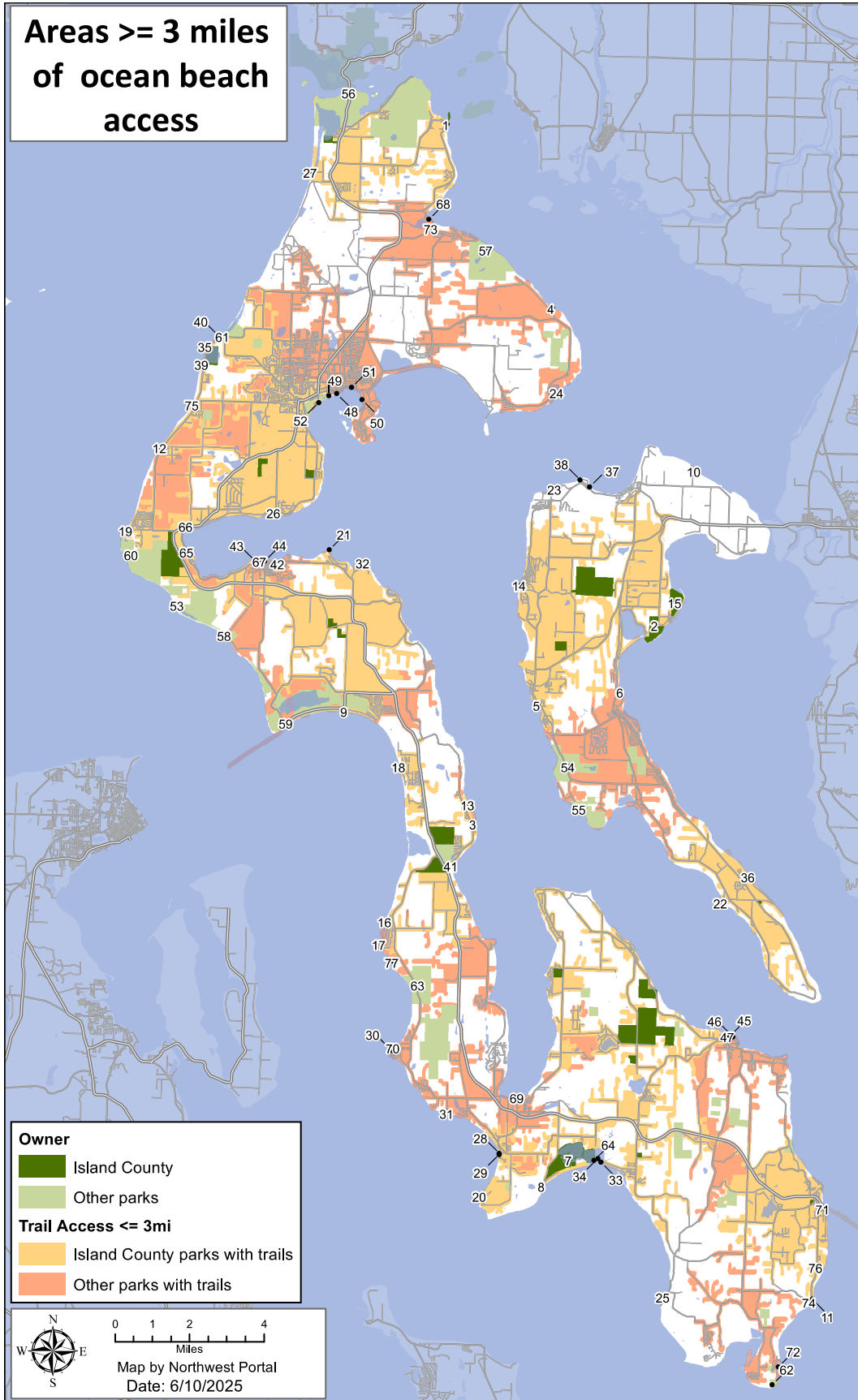
⁽⁶⁾ Managed by WCLT

All agencies combined own 78 sites that provide 24,122 acres of habitat of which the largest holdings are by the Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) of 2 sites for 10,297 acres or 42.7% primarily due to the 10,265-acre holding for the Skagit Bay Estuary, followed by Washington State Parks of 10 sites for 6,899 acres or 28.6% due also to the 4,068-acre holdings for Deception Pass State Park.

Island County owns 20 sites for 2,859 acres or 11.9% and the Whidbey Camano Land Trust (WCLT) 21 sites for 2,462 acres or 10.2% of the total.

While all agencies own a large habitat inventory, there remain significant habitat lands in the county that are not protected especially in north, central, and south Whidbey Island.

**Areas \geq 3 miles
of ocean beach
access**



#	Name
Island County	
1	Ala Spit
2	Barnum Point
3	Beach Combers Road
4	Borgman Road Access
5	Camano View Access
6	Cavalero Beach
7	Deer Lagoon
8	Double Bluff
9	Driftwood Park
10	English Boom
11	Glendale Road End
12	Hastie Lake Road Boat Ramp
13	Hidden Beach
14	High Road End
15	Iverson Preserve
16	Lagoon Point North
17	Lagoon Point South
18	Ledgewood Beach
19	Libbey Beach Park
20	Limpet Lane Road End
21	Long Point Beach
22	Mabana Road End Launch
23	Maple Grove Boat Ramp
24	Mariner's Cove
25	Maxwelton Park
26	Monroe Landing
27	Moran Beach
28	Mutiny Bay Boat Ramp
29	Robinson Beach
30	Sandpiper Ln Beach Access
31	Shore Meadow Beach Access
32	Snatelum Point
33	Sunlight Beach
34	Sunlight County Parcels
35	Swantown Outfall
36	Tillicum Beach
37	Utsalady Boat Ramp
38	Utsalady Vista N Comano
39	West Beach Vista
40	West Beach Vista 3
41	Wonn Road Beach Access
City	
Coupeville	
42	Captain Coupe Park
43	Coupeville Town Park
44	Front Street Stairs
Langley	
45	Langley Seawall Park
46	Boy and Dog Park
47	Thomas Hladkey Memorial Park
Oak Harbor	
48	Flintstone Park
49	Windjammer Park
50	Oak Harbor City Marina
51	Pasek St Water Access
52	Oak Harbor Park Tidelands
Federal - National Park Service	
53	Perego's Lagoon
State	
Washington State Parks	
54	Cama Beach State Park
55	Camano Island State Park
56	Deception Pass State Park
57	Dugalla State Park Property
58	Ebey's Landing State Park
59	Fort Casey State Park
60	Fort Ebey State Park
61	Joseph Whidbey State Park
62	Possession Point State Park
63	South Whidbey State Park
64	Useless Bay
WDFW	
65	Mueller Park
66	Penn Cove N
Districts	
Coupeville Warf (Coupeville Port)	
67	Coupeville Warf (Coupeville Port)
Dugalla Bay Beach (S Whidbey Port)	
Port of South Whidbey	
69	Freeland Park
70	Bush Point Boat Launch
71	Clinton Beach Park
72	Possession Beach Park
Whidbey Camano Land Trust	
73	Dugalla Bay Preserve
74	Glendale Beach Preserve
75	Morgan Tidelands
76	Possession Sound Preserve
77	Smuggler's Cove (WDNR & WCLT)

Table 7-3 Waterfront beach acreage and sites by jurisdiction

Island County	Existing waterfront acreage – sites
1 Ala Spit	16.7
2 Barnum Point	24.5
3 Beach Combers Road	1.1
4 Borgman Road Access	0.1
5 Camano View Access	0.3
6 Cavalero Beach	0.6
7 Deer Lagoon Preserve	377.6
8 Double Bluff	2.7
9 Driftwood Park	0.7
10 English Boom	5.2
11 Glendale Road End	0.2
12 Hastie Lake Road Boat Ramp	0.1
13 Hidden Beach	0.6
14 High Road End	0.1
15 Iverson Preserve	115.1
16 Lagoon Point North	0.3
17 Lagoon Point South	0.3
18 Ledgewood Beach	0.6
19 Libbey Beach Park	2.7
20 Limpet Land Road End	0.1
21 Long Point Beach	1.7
22 Mabana Road End Launch	0.1
23 Maple Grove Boat Ramp	0.8
24 Mariner's Cove	0.5
25 Maxwellton Park	20.0
26 Monroe Landing	0.4
27 Moran Beach	0.4
28 Mutiny Bay Boat Ramp	0.1
29 Robinson Beach	1.3
30 Sandpiper Lane Beach Access	0.2
31 Shore Meadow Beach Access	0.1
32 Snatelum Point	0.5
33 Sunlight Beach	0.4
34 Sunlight County Parcels	0.1

Island County	Existing waterfront acreage – sites
35 Swantown Outfall	0.2
36 Tillicum Beach	0.2
37 Utsalady Boat Ramp	1.5
38 Utsalady Vista North Camano	0.2
39 West Beach Vista	2.0
40 West Beach Vista 3	0.1
41 Wonn Road Beach Access	0.4
Island County Total	(580.8) 41
Towns and Cities Total	
42 Captain Coupe Park	1.9
43 Coupeville Town Park	3.6
44 Front Steet Stairs	0.1
45 Langley Seawall Park	0.7
46 Boy and Dog Park	0.7
47 Thomas Hladkey Memorial Pk	0.0
48 Flintstone Park	20.5
49 Windjammer Park	33.2
50 Oak Harbor City Marina	33.8
51 Pasek Street Water Access	0.4
52 Oak Harbor Park Tidelands	28.5
Towns and Cities Total	(123.4) 11
State and Federal	
53 Perego's Lagoon	17.9
54 Cama Beach State Park	379.0
55 Camano Island State Park	232.0
56 Deception Pass State Park	4,068.0
57 Dugualla State Park Property	586.0
58 Ebey's Landing State Park	28.9
59 Fort Casey State Park	437.0
60 Fort Ebey State Park	696.0
61 Joseph Whidbey State Park	109.0
62 Possession Point State Park	28.0

Island County	Existing waterfront acreage – sites
63 South Whidbey State Park	360.0
64 Useless Bay	560.0
65 Mueller Park	0.5
66 Penn Cove North	1.6
State and Federal Total	(7,503.9) 14
Park & Rec. Districts and Ports	
67 Coupeville Wharf	0.3
68 Dugualla Bay Beach	1.9
69 Freeland Park	3.1
70 Bush Point Boat Launch	1.5
71 Clinton Beach Park	0.6
72 Possession Beach Park	26.2
Park & Rec. and Port Total	(33.6) 6
Whidbey Camano Land Trust (WCLT)	
73 Dugualla Bay Preserve	68.0
74 Glendale Beach Preserve	40.6
75 Morgan Tidelands	6.0
76 Possession Sound Preserve	44.0
77 Smuggler's Cove ⁽¹⁾	11.2
78 Keystone Preserve	216.0
WCLT Total	(385.8) 6
Total	(8,627.5) 78

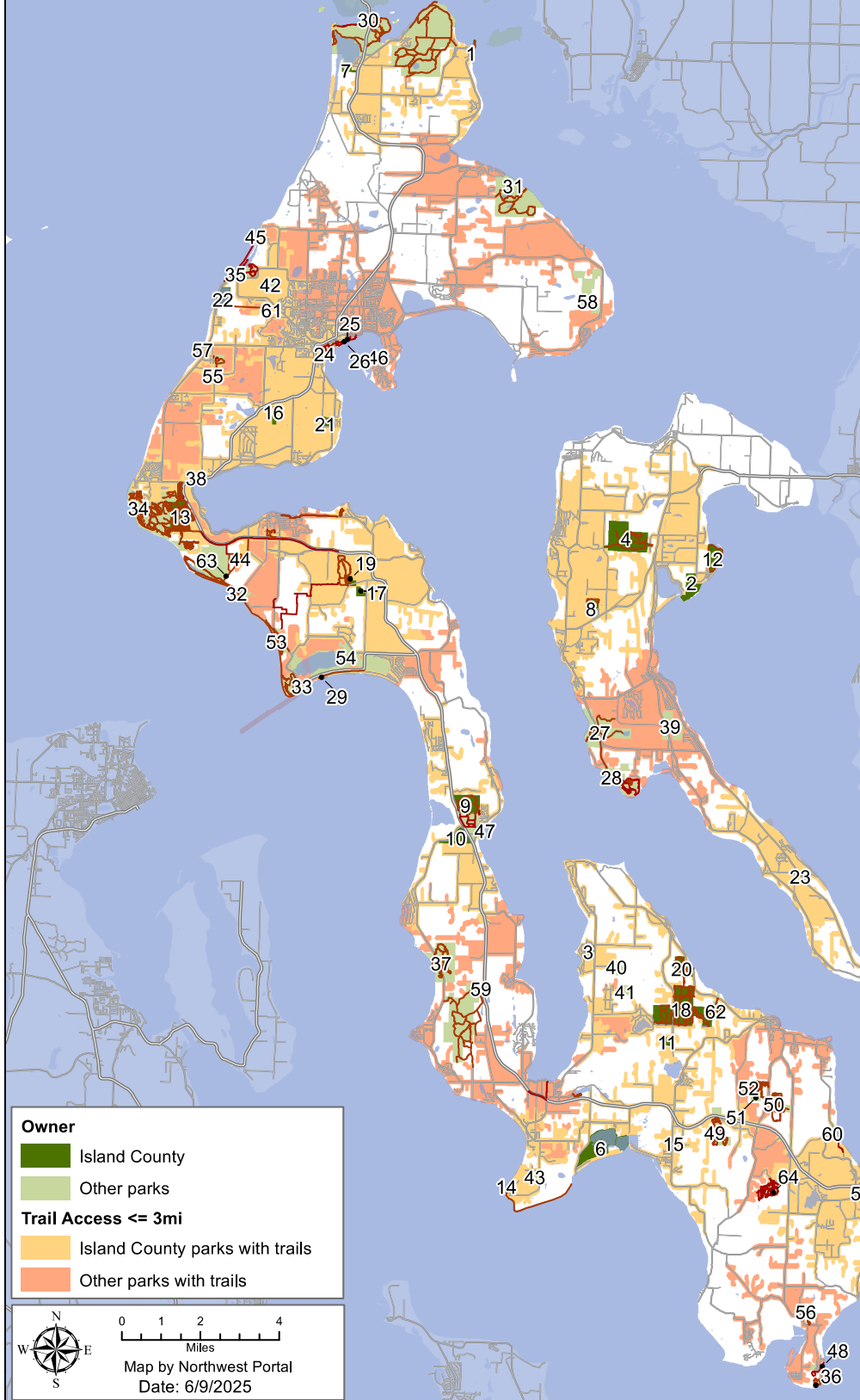
Acreage includes site areas not on the waterfront.

⁽¹⁾ Co-owned with Whidbey Camano Land Trust (WCLT)

All agencies combined own 77 waterfront sites of which 41 sites or 53.2% or owned by Island County, 11 sites or 14.3% by towns and cities, 14 sites or 18.1% by state and federal agencies, 6 sites or 7.8% by park and recreation districts and ports, and 5 sites or 6.5% by the Whidbey Camano Land Trust (WCLT).

While all agencies own a large inventory of waterfront access sites, there remain significant shorelines in the county that are beyond a 3-mile walk/drive zone especially in south Whidbey.

Areas within 3 miles of trail access



#	Name
Island County	
1	Ala Spit
2	Barnum Point
3	Brainers Land Trust
4	Camano Ridge
5	Dan Porter Park
6	Deer Lagoon
7	Ethel Taylor Property
8	Four Springs Lake Preserve
9	Greenbank North
10	Greenbank South
11	Hurt Property
12	Iverson Preserve
13	Kettles Trail Area
14	Limpet Lane Road End
15	Marguerite Brons Park
16	Monroe Landing Trust Land
17	Patmore Pit Dog Park
18	Putney Woods
19	Rhododendron Park
20	Saratoga Woods
21	Scenic Heights Trust Land
22	Swantown Lake
23	Walter G Hutchinson Park
City (Oak Harbor)	
24	Freund Marsh
25	Windjammer Lagoon
26	Windjammer Park
State	
Washington State Parks	
27	Cama Beach State Park
28	Camano Island State Park
29	Crockett Lake Trailhead
30	Deception Pass State Park
31	Dugalla State Park Property
32	Ebey's Landing State Park
33	Fort Casey State Park
34	Fort Ebey State Park
35	Joseph Whidbey State Park
36	Possession Point State Park
37	South Whidbey State Park
WDFW	
38	Penn Cove N
WDNR	
39	Elger Bay Trust Land
40	High Point Trust Land
41	Skyline West Trust Land
42	Swantown Trust Land
43	Wahl Road Trust Land
Federal	
44	Ebey's Landing Trailhead (NPS)
45	Joseph Whidbey Beach Trail (US Navy)
46	Naval Airstation Trail (US Navy)
Districts	
Port Districts	
47	Greenbank Farm (Coupeville)
48	Possession Beach Park (South Whidbey)
South Whidbey Park & Rec District	
49	Maxwelton Trails Park
50	South Whidbey Park
51	Maxwelton Trust Land
South Whidbey School District	
52	Elementary School Trails Site
Non-Profits	
Whidbey Camano Land Trust	
53	Admiralty Inlet NAP
54	Crockett Lake Preserve
55	Del Fairfax Forest Preserve
56	Hammon Preserve
57	Morgan Tidelands
58	Strawberry Point Preserve
59	Trillium Community Forest
60	Waterman Shoreline Preserve
Other Non-Profits	
61	Beach View Farm Trailhead (Christian Reformed Church)
62	Metcalf Trust
63	Nature Conservancy Lands
64	Whidbey Institute Trailhead

Table 7-4 Trail miles by jurisdiction

Island County	Existing park trail miles
1 Ala Spit	0.5
2 Barnum Point	N/A
3 Brainers Land Trust	N/A
4 Camano Ridge	3.9
5 Dan Porter Park	N/A
6 Deer Lagoon Preserve	N/A
7 Ethyl Taylor Property	N/A
8 Four Springs Lake Preserve	1.6
9 Greenbank North	3.1
10 Greenbank South	N/A
11 Hurt Property	N/A
12 Iverson Preserve	1.7
13 Kettles Trail Area	12.6
14 Limpet Lane Road End	N/A
15 Marguerite Brons Park	N/A
16 Monroe Landing Trust	N/A
17 Patmore Pit Dog Park	N/A
18 Putney Woods	13.4
19 Rhododendron Park	3.4
20 Saratoga Woods	4.2
21 Scenic Heights Trust Land	N/A
22 Swantown Lake	0.4
23 Walter G Hutchinson Park	N/A
Island County total	44.8
Towns and cities	
24 Freund Marsh	1.0
25 Windjammer Lagoon	0.8
26 Windjammer Park	3.0
Towns and cities total	4.8
State and federal	
27 Cama Beach State Park	15.0
28 Camano Island State Park	4.5
29 Crockett Lake Trailhead	1.2
30 Deception Pass State Park	22.6

Island County	Existing park trail miles
31 Dugualla State Park Property	4.3
32 Ebey's Landing State Park	1.7
33 Fort Casey State Park	2.6
34 Fort Ebey State Park	28.0
35 Joseph Whidbey State Park	5.5
36 Possession Point State Park	0.9
37 South Whidbey State Park	5.1
38 Penn Cove North	N/A
39 Elger Bay Trust Land	N/A
40 High Point Trust Land	N/A
41 Skyline West Trust Land	N/A
42 Swantown Trust Land	N/A
43 Wahl Road Trust Land	N/A
44 Ebey's Landing Trailhead	N/A
45 Joseph Whidbey Beach Trail	1.0
46 Naval Airstation Trail ⁽¹⁾	0.6
State and federal total	92.4
Park & Rec. Districts & Ports	
47 Greenbank Farm	1.9
48 Possession Beach Park	0.8
50 South Whidbey Park	3.6
51 Maxwelton Trust Land	3.2
52 Elementary School Trails Site	3.8
Park & Rec./Ports total	13.3
Nonprofits	
53 Admiralty Inlet NAP	2.3
54 Crockett Lake Preserve	N/A
55 Del Fairfax Forest Preserve	1.0
56 Hammon Preserve	0.3
57 Morgan Tidelands	0.5
58 Strawberry Point Preserve	1.6
59 Trillium Community Forest	7.0
60 Waterman Shoreline Preserve	N/A
61 Beach View Farm Trailhead ⁽¹⁾	N/A
62 Metcalf Trust	1.3

Island County	Existing park trail miles
63 Nature Conservancy Lands	5.8
64 Whidbey Institute Trailhead	5.8
Nonprofits total	25.6
65 Oak Harbor Waterfront Trail	3.0
66 Coupeville/SR-20 Trail	5.1
Off-road multipurpose total	8.1
All total	189.0

⁽⁴⁾ Trail open to Military personnel only.

All agencies combined own approximately 189.0 miles with hike, bike, and horse trails of which 44.8 miles or 23.3% are owned by Island County, 4.8 miles or 2.5% by towns and cities, 92.4 miles or 48.5% by state and federal agencies, 13.3 miles or 6.9% by park and recreation districts and ports, or 14.5% by nonprofits, and 8.1 miles or 4.2% or off-road.

While all agencies own a large inventory of park trails, there remain significant areas in the county that are beyond a 10-minute walk/drive zone within Island County.

7.2.2.1 County Land By Department

Island County manages 3,741.6 acres of park land most of which is managed by the Parks Department or Public Works including 289.2 acres of open space properties held as potential parks or habitat areas, but currently not assigned to a particular department for management.

- The Parks Department is responsible for more than half of the acreage associated with Parks and Habitat Conservation Areas in Island County (1,800 acres) including Rhododendron Park and the Four Springs Lake Preserve.
- Through other divisions, the Public Works Department manages more than 930 acres, including the dike in Deer Lagoon Preserve, North and South Greenbank Farm, the Kettles Trail System, and a few beach access sites.
- Island County also owns or holds 289.2 acres (44 parcels) that are not assigned to a particular department or division for management. These unassigned sites include wetlands, remnant prairies, beach access, and numerous tax-title lands.
- As special maintenance areas, the Parks Department co-owns with the Port of South Whidbey 3 sites through inter-local agreements including a section of Freeland Park, a section of Maxwellton Park, and Robinson Bay (owned by South Whidbey but maintained by Island County Parks).
- Through long-term lease agreements, Island County manages over 330 acres of School Trust Lands owned by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, (DNR) that include Elger Bay Preserve, High Point Trust land, Strawberry Point Trust Land, Swantown Trust Land, Skyline West Trust Land, Smuggler’s Cove Trust Land, and Wahl Road Trust Land.

7.2.3.2.1 Other

The County also owns several properties that do not fit into the Park Land Classification system. They are identified in the inventories and Tables as “Other” properties. An example is Camano campuses and Pioneer Cemetery. One of these “Other” properties are managed by a community organization and is not considered part of the County park system (Freeland Hall).

As noted in the table, the majority of County park land (75%) is classified as Natural Recreation Areas. Conservation Areas account for about 20% of the entire system. About 13% is categorized as Community Parks. Approximately 2% of County-owned properties are classified as “other.”

7.2.3 Level of Service

The *National Recreation & Park Association (NRPA) Areas and Facilities Standards* has not been updated in more than 20 years and will never again be updated because there is not a single set of standards for parks and recreation that could encompass the uniqueness found in every park agency. Park agencies vary greatly by size, needs and desires; as should a park and recreation agency’s offerings. To have the same standard for a community in Washington, Alaska, Kansas, and south Florida is unrealistic, impractical, and potentially detrimental.

Nearly a decade ago, NRPA replaced the single set of standards with a nationwide benchmarking tool for parks and recreation. *NRPA Park Metrics* is the most comprehensive source of data benchmarks and insights for park and recreation agencies. Each spring, NRPA publishes *NRPA Agency Performance Review*, an annual report summarizing the benchmarking data contributed by nearly 1,100 park and recreation agencies to the *Park Metrics* database.

The report presents the “typical” (median) nationwide benchmarking numbers based on peer agency data and the limitations of the former one-size-fits-all set of standards. For example, in the *2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review*: the typical park and recreation agency has 1 park per 2,386 residents. The report, however, indicates significant variation in the metric when the size of the jurisdiction being served by the agency is taken into consideration.

For example, jurisdictions of less than 20,000 residents have a median of 1 park for every 1,172 residents, but agencies serving more than 250,000 residents have a park for every 6,120 people served. In addition, the benchmark data within NRPA Park Metrics and the 2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review break down to the lower (25%) and upper (75%) quartiles.

For example, the ratio of parks per persons for Island County’s 2025 population of 86,267 persons, or within the 50,000-99,999-peer agency population comparison, would be a median of 1 park per 2,346 persons but ranges from 1 park per 1,489 persons in the lower quartile to 1 park per 4,048 persons in the upper quartile.

There is no one-size-fits all solution for maintaining and improving a park and recreation agency. The *2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review* does not provide “standards”, but an informative evidence-based guideline. Factors such as jurisdiction population, the unique needs of each community and funding all play a major role in how an agency operates.

7.2.3.2.2 Benchmark comparisons

The following benchmark comparisons are for the low, median, and upper quartiles for park agencies of 50,000-99,000 population since Island County’s 2025 population of 86,267 is projected to increase to 99,202 by 2045. (Note – the next peer agency comparison is for 100,000-249,999 considerably above Island County’s projected population.)

7.2.3.2.3 Residents per park

	Lower	Median	Upper
NRPA benchmark	1,489	2,346	4,048
PROS ratios year:		2025	2045
Island County		838	963
All agencies		392	451

The inventory includes publicly accessible county, cities, school districts, federal, state, port, park and recreation districts, and nonprofits.

Island County currently provides 103 parks and open spaces or 1 park per 838 persons and all park agencies combined including the county, cities, school districts, federal, state, port, park and recreation districts, and nonprofits provide 220 parks and open spaces or 1 park per 392 persons, considerably above the ratio typical of peer agencies with 50,000-99,999 population.

If Island County does not acquire more parks by 2045 the ratio of residents per park will be 963 persons and for all agencies combined 451 residents per park which remains considerably above peer agency ratios.

Island County does not need more park property to accommodate resident needs though a considerable portion of the park inventory is oriented to tourist, or non-resident interests and users.

7.2.3.2.4 Acres of parkland per 1,000 population

“Parkland” includes maintained parks and accessible open space areas which does not include conservation easements.

	Lower	Median	Upper
NRPA benchmark	4.8	10.2	17.4
PROS ratios year:		2025	2045
Island County		43.3	37.7
All agencies		120.0	104.4

The inventory includes publicly accessible county, cities, school districts, federal, state, port, park and recreation districts, and nonprofits.

Island County currently provides 3,741.6 acres of parklands or 43.3 acres per 1,000 residents while all park agencies combined provide 10,356.0 acres or 120.0 acres per 1,000 residents.

If Island County does not acquire more parklands by 2045 the ratio of parkland per 1,000 residents will be 37.7 acres per 1,000 residents and all agencies combined 104.4 acres per 1,000 residents which remains considerably above peer agency ratios.

Island County does not need more parkland but rather a diversification of activities on existing parks and properties.

7.2.3.2.5 Acres of conservation easements per 1,000 population

Conservation easements include purchased or agreements on privately-owned lands to protect wildlife habitat, farmlands, or forests from development. NRPA does not calculate ratios for conservation easements.

	Lower	Median	Upper
NRPA benchmark	N/A	N/A	N/A
PROS ratios year:		2025	2045
Island County		23.5	20.4
All agencies		38.0	37.6

The inventory includes publicly accessible county, cities, school districts, federal, state, port, park and recreation districts, and nonprofits.

Island County currently provides 2,023.0 acres of conservation easements or 23.5 acres per 1,000 residents while all park agencies combined provide 3,278.4 acres or 38.0 acres per 1,000 residents.

If Island County does not acquire more conservation easements by 2045 the ratio per 1,000 residents will be 20.4 acres per 1,000 residents and for all agencies combined 37.8 acres per 1,000 residents.

However, there are significant unprotected wildlife, farm, and forest acreage that needs protection from development that Island County should pursue in concert with cities, federal, state, port, park and recreation districts, and nonprofits.

7.2.3.2.6 Miles of trail

	Lower	Median	Upper
NRPA benchmark	8.0	18.1	37.0
PROS miles year:		2025	2045
Island County		44.8	44.8
All agencies		189.0	189.0

The inventory includes publicly accessible county, cities, school districts, federal, state, port, park and recreation districts, and nonprofits.

- (1) Park trails have not all been inventoried in miles.
- (1) Multipurpose trail miles have not all been inventoried in miles.

Island County amenities		
	Island County	All agencies
Beach access	24	35
Hand carry launch site	2	6
Boat ramp	10	25
Dock/pier	2	4
Campground	2	7
Tent and RV campsites	15	611
Kayak overnight campsite	1	7
Bike overnight campsite		8
Dog park/off-leash areas	5	7
Community garden		3
Picnic facility	25	70
Playground	5	45
Basketball court	0.5	10
Volleyball court	1	6

Island County amenities		
Tennis court	2	26
Pickleball court	6	7
Disc golf		1
Baseball field	6	33
Soccer field		29
Football field		5
Track		4
Exercise course		3
Skateboard park		3
Pump track		2
Outdoor event space	2	7
Meeting facility	7	16
Swimming pool		2

Island County includes Fairgrounds.

- (1) Park trails have not been inventoried in miles.
- (2) Multipurpose trail miles have not all been inventoried in miles.

7.2.3.2.7 Amenity benchmarks per median number of residents

	%	Median	2025
Beach access	*	*	2,464
Hand carry launch site	*	*	14,377
Boat ramp	*	*	3,450
Dock/pier	*	*	21,566
Campground	*	*	12,323
Tent, RV campsites	*	*	136
Kayak campsite	*	*	12,323
Bike campsite	*	*	10,783
Dog park/ off-leash areas	68%	55,135	12,323
Community garden	52%	56,150	28,755
Picnic facility	*	*	1,232
Playground	93%	3,707	1,917
Basketball court	84%	8,363	8,626
Volleyball court	23%	26,612	14,377
Tennis court	72%	5,865	3,317
Pickleball court	42%	10,500	12,323

	%	Median	2025
Disc golf	20%	58,603	86,267
Baseball field	85%	3,675	2,614
Soccer field	83%	4,070	2,974
Football field	*	*	17,253
Track	*	*	21,566
Exercise course	22%	35,000	28,755
Skateboard park	46%	60,904	28,755
Pump track	*	*	43,133
Outdoor event space	40%	59,000	12,323
Meeting facility	59%	52,000	5,391
Swimming pool	49%	46,353	43,133

The inventory includes publicly accessible county, cities, school districts, federal, state, port, park and recreation districts, and nonprofits.

* 2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review does not include benchmark or percent provided by comparable agencies.

Island County’s combined agencies provide more recreational facilities per residents than comparable agencies in the 50,000-99,000-population range for all activities except disc golf where NRPA identifies benchmarks. While the inventory does not identify the quality of the facilities, there is nonetheless enough recreational facilities to service the existing Island County population.

NRPA does not provide benchmarks for beach, hand carry, boating, camping, or picnicking facilities. Given the extensive state park system in the county, however, there should be more than enough to satisfy county resident interests.

7.2.3.2.8 Island County proposed amenities 2025-2045 to existing parks

Island County Parks and Public Works currently provides an extensive network of beach and fishing access sites, hand carry and boat launch ramps, park hike, bike, and horse trails, off-leash areas and dog parks, picnic facilities, a small number of courts and fields, 2 outdoor event spaces, and 7 meeting facilities.

	2025	2045
Beach access	24	25
Hand carry launch site	2	4
Boat ramp	10	10
Dock/pier	2	2
Kayak overnight camp	0	1
Campsites	15	15
Hiking trail in park	22	25
Biking trail in park	6	6

	2025	2045
Horse trail in park	5	6
Dog park/off-leash	5	6
Picnic facility	25	38
Playground	5	6
Basketball court	0.5	0.5
Volleyball court	1	1
Tennis court	2	2
Pickleball court	6	15
Baseball field	6	6
Soccer field	0	1
Skateboard park	0	0
Pump track	0	3
Outdoor event space	2	2
Meeting facility	7	7

This PROS Plan update proposes to add 1 beach access site, 2 hand carry launch ramps, 3 park hike, 1 bike, and 1 horse trails, 1 dog park, 13 picnic facilities, 1 playground, 9 pickleball courts, 1 soccer field, and 3 pump tracks to existing parks to realize opportunities to improve and diversify Island County parks.

The county may acquire through purchase or easement additional lands of opportunity containing habitat, beach, or trail connections outlined in the preceding.

8.1.1 Existing County Habitat

All County parks protect habitat—although the amount varies greatly from site to site. Habitat types were identified using the United States Geological Survey (USGS) Northwest Regional Gap Analysis data.

The USGS Northwest Regional Gap Analysis uses remote sensing data from satellite and aerial images to identify different types of land cover in the Pacific Northwest. Although the usefulness of this data for smaller parcels is limited, the data can be used to make generalized conclusions regarding the types of habitats protected in Island County.

The data identifies 25 habitat types in Island County. Working with the Land Trust, the Project Management Team grouped these habitat types into 7 categories, as shown in Table 7-8.

Table 7-8. Island County Habitats

Department	# of Sites
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open Water
Developed Parkland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed, Open Space Developed, Low Intensity Developed, High Intensity
Farmland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pasture/Hay Cultivated Cropland

Department	# of Sites
Shoreline/Tidal Habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unconsolidated Shore • Temperate Pacific Intertidal Mudflat • North Pacific Montane Massive Bedrock, Cliff and Talus • North Pacific Maritime Coastal Sand Dune and Strand • North Pacific Hypermaritime Shrub/Herbaceous Headland • North Pacific Maritime Eelgrass Bed • Temperate Pacific Tidal Salt and Brackish Marsh
Forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Pacific Maritime/Douglas-fir/Western Hemlock Forest • North Pacific Broadleaf Landslide Forest and Shrubland • North Pacific Lowland Riparian Forest and Shrubland • Harvested forest-regeneration
Freshwater Habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Pacific Shrub Swamp • North Pacific Intertidal Freshwater Wetland • Temperate Pacific Freshwater Emergent Marsh • North Pacific Bog and Fen • North Pacific Hardwood-Conifer Swamp
Prairie & Oak Woodlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Pacific Herbaceous Bald and Bluff • Willamette Valley Upland Prairie and Savannah • North Pacific Oak Woodland

Approximately 75% of the County’s park acreage is forested, Approximately 14% is shoreline or tidal habitat areas; 3% is freshwater habitat, and 1% is farmland. In total, approximately 98% of the Island County park system is characterized by natural land covers and habitat. Developed parkland accounts for just over 3% of the park and habitat system.

8.2 COUNTY AREA OF FOCUS

In 2011, Using findings from public involvement activities conducted as part of the PROS planning process, the following vision, mission, and area of focus are defined for the Parks Department that are consistent with community priorities for recreation and habitat conservation.

8.2.1 Planning Framework

8.2.1.1 Vision, Mission, and Values for Parks

Island County envisions an interconnected system of park lands that provide the best recreation, conservation, and sustainability in the state.

Through focused investment, site design, park development, maintenance, and stewardship, Island County Parks will provide outdoor recreation opportunities while protecting priority habitats to support the long-term health and well-being of county residents, the economy, and our natural resources.

- **Sustainability:** We value efficient and effective management and stewardship of natural resources and County park lands to sustain such lands for current and future generations.

- **Quality of Life:** We value the role that park lands play in supporting the long-term health, well-being, and safety of county residents, economy, and natural resources.
- **Recreation:** We value healthy opportunities for outdoor play and relaxation, supported through the provision of accessible park lands, trails, shorelines, natural areas, and outdoor recreation facilities.
- **Habitat Conservation:** We value maintaining and protecting the integrity of Whidbey and Camano Island’s significant natural areas.
- **Long-Term Success:** We value vibrant thriving park lands and will strive for excellence in county efforts to create a better future for Island County residents.

8.2.2 Area of Focus

Residents and visitors to Island County have many different needs and desires associated with parks, recreation facilities, trails, and habitat areas. Given its limited resources, Island County cannot meet all these needs. Island County Parks Department has defined a specific area of focus within the context of other agencies and groups who provide recreation opportunities and habitat conservation areas on one or both islands.

Island County will provide habitat and outdoor recreation, reflecting a desire to protect habitat and meet outdoor, recreation needs. Island County will take a balanced approach toward addressing outdoor recreation and habitat conservation priorities that will require conscientious acquisition, design, development, maintenance, and stewardship of parks to protect critical areas from development while supporting recreation opportunities. Individual areas may be focused on habitat conservation, recreation, or both, according to the County’s area of focus.

Figure 7-1. The County’s Area of Focus



Island County will focus its resources on providing outdoor recreation opportunities that are compatible with habitat conservation goals. Island County Parks will phase out its interest in the following by encouraging other recreation and habitat providers to address these types of needs:

Traditional Recreation: Island County Parks will phase out its investments in traditional recreation opportunities, such as those found at Dan Porter, Dave Mackie, Rhododendron ball fields, and Camano Park, by finding other providers to assume responsibility for the properties who will operate more effectively for public use. The County will limit any new facilities that support active, organized, indoor or active recreational opportunities, such as sports fields, basketball or tennis courts, skate parks, community centers, swimming pools, etc. However, the County will maintain the current facilities until other providers can meet these needs, should the community desire these types of opportunities.

Conservation Areas with no Recreational Uses: Conservation Areas are lands set aside primarily for ecological conservation purposes but may provide outdoor recreational uses that are secondary to and do not conflict with conservation values. The Island County Parks Department will only invest in lands that both protect habitat and provide for outdoor recreational opportunities. Other Island County departments may continue to protect Conservation Area lands (as provided for in the Natural Resources Element of the Comprehensive Plan) that are not appropriate for recreational uses.

8.2.2.1 Park Development

In areas that are suitable for outdoor recreation, Island County will support facilities that provide self-directed outdoor activities such as walking, biking, hiking, wildlife viewing, horseback riding, camping, boating, clamming, hunting, swimming and beach activities, and picnicking. The County will avoid active park uses that could damage natural resources and will limit temporary, higher intensity activities (such as large group gatherings) to appropriate sites.

The types of outdoor recreation facilities that are consistent with the County's area of focus and provide a general overview of major considerations for site selection include.

- **Appropriate Amenities and Facilities:** Amenities and facilities are consistent with the County's area of focus. The County may develop parks with any of these amenities unless a site-specific design or resource protection issue makes that amenity impractical or undesirable for a particular site.
- **Amenities and Facilities to Consider:** Facilities are consistent with the County's area of focus, but, because of their greater impact, should be carefully planned and considered before development.
- **Amenities and Facilities to Avoid:** Are those that are not consistent with Island County's area of focus and should not be included in County park development.

While not a comprehensive list of allowable or unpermitted uses, regarding the County's area of focus site characteristics and habitat needs will affect facility location, design, and development.

The County's area of focus reinforces and refines the current direction for park and habitat planning, based on community desires, existing resources, and current management strategies. Most, but not all facilities and sites within the County's existing inventory, reflect this area of focus. However, some changes in land and facility management, maintenance, and operations will be necessary to ensure best practices according to the habitat and outdoor recreation provider area of focus.

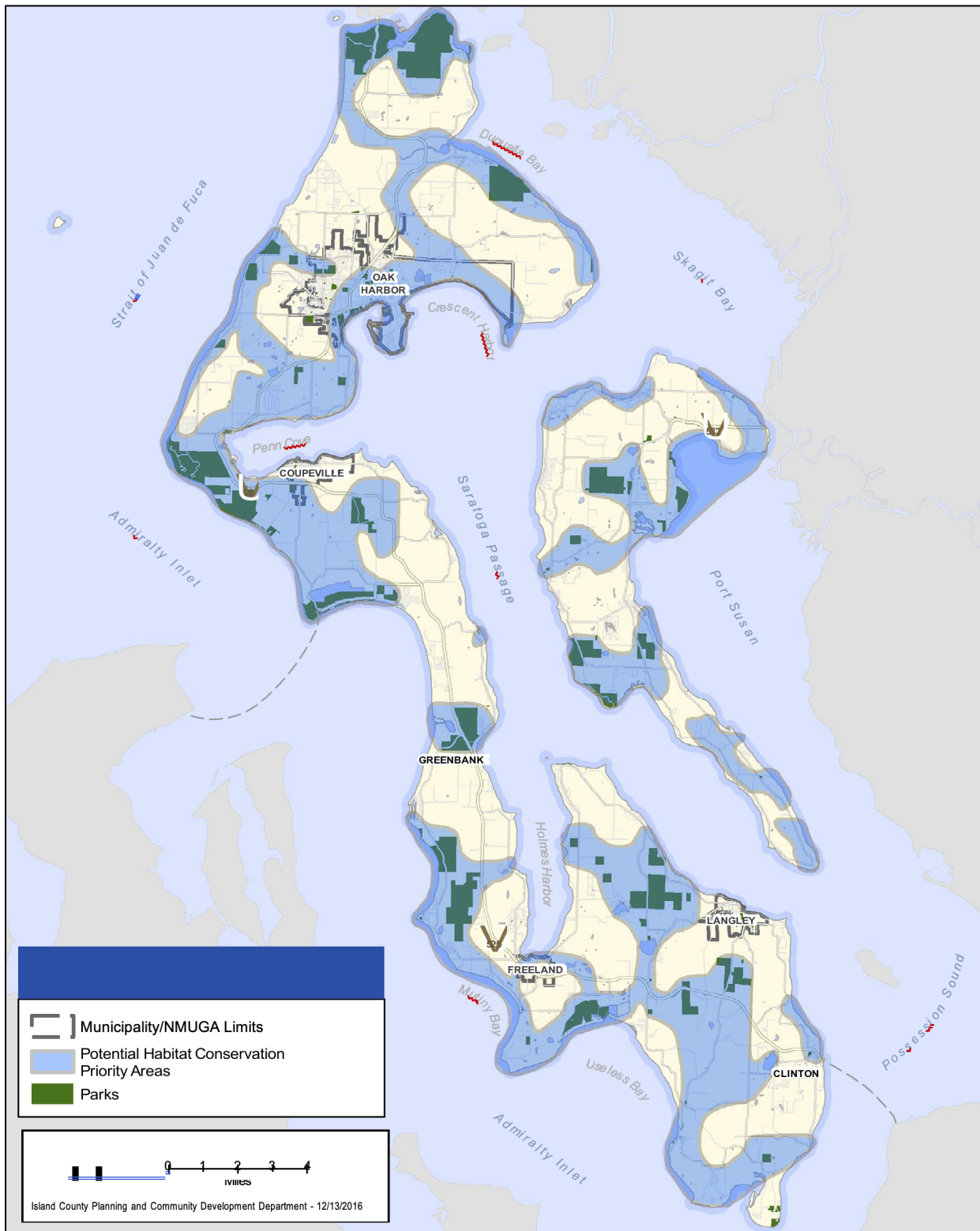
8.3 HABITAT CONSERVATION AND RECREATION NEEDS

A 'Community Needs Assessment' was conducted to identify outdoor recreation and conservation needs in Island County that enhance the County's area of focus. This assessment included identification of habitat conservation criteria, a GIS analysis to assess where opportunities are needed for two key County outdoor recreation focuses, and a discussion of needs for additional outdoor recreation opportunities that support the County's area of focus. This section summarizes the methodology and findings of the Community Needs Assessment. The criteria and map will be used, in conjunction with the map of existing open space (map 6E), to analyze and prioritize future potential acquisitions.

8.3.1 Habitat Conservation Needs

Island County Parks will limit its focus to habitat areas that have the capacity to address outdoor recreation needs. Island County already owns and manages lands that support this area of focus by protecting wildlife habitat and open space, improving water and environmental quality, supporting aquifer recharge and water filtering, and protecting critical, sensitive, or ecologically important areas, such as shorelines, wetlands, prairies and oak woodlands, upland forests, while providing recreation access.

MAP 7L. Habitat Conservation Priorities for Parks Acquisition



This map is intended to be used as a GUIDE. Island County is providing this information as a general geographic representation that should not be used for precise measurements or calculations. Some of the features on this map are not accurately depicted. Any user of this map assumes all responsibility for use and agrees to hold Island County harmless for liability, damages, or loss incurred by use of this information. Specific questions should be directed to Island County's Department of Planning and Community Development.

Table 7-11. Habitat and Outdoor Recreation Provider Area of Focus

<p>Description:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County park lands include Parks, Natural Recreation Areas and Conservation Areas that have a capacity to meet the community’s outdoor, low-impact outdoor recreation needs. These park lands contain natural resources that are managed for conservation, as well as amenities and facilities that are maintained for recreation.
<p>Site Selection:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site size and configuration should be based on habitat and/or recreation needs. Size and shape should be determined by resource conservation or recreational needs. • Site location should be based on the location of significant natural resources (e.g., aquifer recharge areas, habitats of local importance, critical shoreline, important ecosystems, wetlands, etc.) or the location of place-based recreation opportunities (suitable shoreline for boat launches, etc.) • Sites should be well-distributed on both islands to meet the recreation needs of all County residents. • Amenities and facilities should be limited to support the numbers and types of visitors the site can accommodate, while retaining resource value and natural character.
<p>Appropriate Amenities and Facilities:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site identification and interpretive signs • Appropriate site furnishings for the intended scale and use of the park (benches, picnic tables, bike racks, trash receptacles) • Seasonal or permanent restrooms • Off-street parking • Trail and pathway system • Trailhead or entry/kiosk • Viewpoints or viewing blinds • Equestrian trailheads and staging areas • Motorized boat ramps and hand carry boat launches • Swimming beaches • Water access areas (for clamming, beach walks, etc.) • Shelters (small or medium sized) • Picnic areas (group areas or dispersed tables) • Dog parks and off-leash dog areas • Primitive campgrounds (no electricity, showers, etc.) • Deer hunting areas • Restoration areas for natural resource protection or regeneration • Other amenities compatible with the County’s area of focus

<p>Amenities and Facilities to Consider:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community gathering and event space to support large-group gatherings (e.g., community festivals, outdoor weddings, trail races, waterfront events, farmer’s markets) • Facilities, concessions, or vendor space to support outdoor recreation (e.g., boat storage, boat moorage, boat rental, bike rental, outdoor ropes course, riding stables, etc.) • Outdoor interpretive or environmental educational facilities (e.g., small amphitheatres, fire rings, shelters/ kiosks for environmental programming, etc.) • Outdoor recreation facilities reflecting character of site (e.g., nature play areas, horseshoe pits, disc golf) • Temporary/permanent caretaker’s residences • Storage and maintenance buildings • Community gardens • Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs), u-pick farms and orchards, leased agricultural lands, etc.
<p>Amenities and Facilities to Avoid:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional active use facilities (sports fields, sport courts, skate parks, etc.) • Indoor facilities, including community centers, recreation centers, nature centers, and museums. • Restaurants or indoor concessions that do not support passive outdoor recreation. • High-impact outdoor facilities, such as full-service marinas, RV campgrounds, ATV/OHV areas, swimming pools, golf courses, miniature golf courses, BMX racetracks, equestrian arenas, event amphitheatres, etc. • High maintenance landscaping, such as turf areas, annual plantings, or ornamental gardens • Other uses and programs that conflict with the County’s area of focus

Table 7-12. Management and Operations Habitat/Recreation Provider Area of Focus

Land & Facilities Management	
<p>Future Acquisition</p>	<p>Whether acquired through purchase, donation, or transfer, the Island County Parks Department should only acquire new sites that can help meet both low-impact recreation and habitat conservation needs. Other Island County Departments may acquire new sites that provide important habitat and natural resources, as provided for in the Natural Lands Element of the Comprehensive Plan.</p>
<p>New Facility Development</p>	<p>The County should distribute facilities equitably to provide recreation opportunities in all service areas, while carefully considering habitat needs. Not all sites will be suitable for or have the capacity to support all types of recreation.</p>
<p>Implication for Existing Land and Facilities</p>	<p>The existing inventory should be evaluated to determine:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Which sites and/or facilities do not fit within this area of focus. The County will need a transition strategy to determine how to address these facilities and properties. 2) Which existing sites are suitable for increased recreational development without significantly degrading site habitat function or quality. The County should increase its capital investment at appropriate sites to meet identified needs.
<p>Maintenance/Operations</p>	<p>This habitat conservation/outdoor recreation area of focus will require increased staffing and/ or funding for facility maintenance and habitat stewardship—particularly if habitat restoration is desired. Partnerships with concessionaires and volunteers may be considered to reduce staffing needs.</p>

Land & Facilities Management	
Administration/ Management	A higher level of habitat management and facility administration is needed. This may include a half-time staff position as a volunteer coordinator and concessions manager to oversee partnerships with volunteers, non-profits, friends' groups, caretakers, lease holders, and concessionaires.
Programming/ Events	Island County should support programs and events that are consistent with its vision, mission, and area of focus. The County is most likely to operate as a facility provider, collaborating with community groups, partners, and concessionaires to provide appropriate programming and outdoor events, such as outdoor community events, environmental education, campground programs, facility-based programming (e.g., boating, hunting, trails), etc.

8.3.1.1 Habitat Conservation Criteria

Island County and WCLT discussed key criteria for determining habitat conservation needs and priorities. Because so many agencies and organizations are working on conservation in Island County, Island County will focus on using existing data to be an effective steward of public resources. To evaluate priorities on a County-wide scale, data that is consistent across the entire County is intended to be dynamic, not to paint a static picture of habitat needs across the County. As newer or better information is developed, the County can continue to refine its habitat conservation priorities to make decisions about specific parcels and incorporate site specific data if it is available.

Using existing data in Island County, the below criteria was developed to identify priority habitat conservation areas.

8.3.1.1.1 Identified as a Whidbey Camano Land Trust Priority Habitat

As part of the Land Trust's efforts to permanently protect the most important and irreplaceable lands and waters on Camano and Whidbey Islands, the organization has developed a Land Protection Plan and Protection Priorities Map. First created in 2003 based on known data and input from experts, the Land Protection Plan Map highlights the Land Trust's identified target areas.

8.3.1.1.2 Adjacent to Other Conservation Lands

Larger protected areas provide better habitat than smaller isolated parcels. For this reason, the criterion included any land within 1,000 feet of an Island County park land; Non-profit habitat and easements; State Parks; and National Park Service (NPS) sites and easements. These parcels would allow existing conservation lands to expand.

8.3.2.1.3 Oak Harbor

Oak Harbor's shoreline area and a stretch on the northeast side of the island contains important aquifer recharge areas, old-growth forest, critical shoreline, wildlife habitat, oak woodlands, significant habitat, protected plant communities and prairie soils, areas of critical shoreline, and wetlands. Urban development in Oak Harbor on the northeast side of Whidbey Island forms a barrier to wildlife movement, and a wildlife corridor for migration around Oak Harbor should be considered.

8.3.2.1.4 Swantown Lake

The area near Swantown Lake contains important aquifer recharge areas, habitats of local importance, prime farmland, scenic vistas, wildlife habitat, mature forests, rare habitat, critical shoreline, prairie soils, unstable slopes, and wetlands that provides the opportunity for protection of a wildlife corridor around Oak Harbor on the west side of Whidbey Island.

8.3.2.1.5 Penn Cove Area

The area north and west of Coupeville contains small aquifer recharge areas, habitats of local importance, rare habitat, wildlife habitat, scenic vistas, prime farmlands, critical shoreline, significant prairie soil areas, some protected plant communities, some unstable slopes, and some wetlands that extends from coast to coast, potentially providing an important corridor across Whidbey Island.

8.3.2.1.6 Coupeville South

The area south of Coupeville contains aquifer recharge areas, habitats of local importance, rare habitat, important wildlife habitat, extensive critical shoreline, scenic and historic vistas, prairie and grassland habitat, oak woodlands, protected plant communities, prime working farmlands, significant prairie soil areas, some unstable slopes, and wetlands.

8.3.1.1.3 Contains Critical Areas

Island County identifies and updates Critical Areas through its Critical Areas Ordinance, which includes wetlands and aquifer recharge areas as well as unstable slopes.

8.3.1.1.4 Contains Rare Habitat

Prairies and Oak Woodlands were identified by the Project Management Team as priority rare habitat in Island County.

8.3.1.1.5 Contains Other Significant Habitat

The site contains “Habitats of Local Importance” and “Protected Plant Communities” on Whidbey and Camano Islands or has been identified by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Natural Heritage Program as potentially containing rare plants and ecosystems.

8.3.1.1.6 Prioritized in the Shoreline Master Program

Shoreline areas designated as Aquatic, Natural, Rural Conservancy and Urban Conservancy within Island County, or otherwise identified for habitat conservation in the updated of the Shoreline Master Program (SMP).

8.3.2 A Habitat Conservation Concept for Island County

Map 7L depicts an illustrative habitat conservation concept for Island County, created by applying the criteria described in the section above. This illustration presents an overall concept but does not identify specific needs or priorities for habitat acquisition.

8.3.2.1.7 Greenbank

The area immediately around Greenbank has important plant communities and an important aquifer recharge area to the northeast of Greenbank most of which is protected by various agencies or owned by the US Navy. Because Whidbey Island is relatively narrow from the area south of Coupeville to the Freeland area, this region is vulnerable to blockage of north-south wildlife movement over the long term and a protected wildlife corridor should be considered.

8.3.2.1.8 Trillium Community Forest/Bush Point

This elongated area on the west side of Whidbey Island contains aquifer recharge areas, rare habitat, large areas of wildlife habitat, critical shoreline (on the north side of Bush Point landform), protected plant communities, unstable slopes, and wetlands.

8.3.2.1.9 Freeland

The area around Freeland, particularly south of Freeland between Mutiny Bay and Useless Bay, includes important aquifer recharge areas, habitats of local importance, fish and wildlife habitat, scenic vistas, prime farmland, critical shoreline, some unstable slopes, and wetlands. As Freeland develops, a protected wildlife corridor should be considered.

8.3.2.1.10 Putney Woods

This area north includes important aquifer recharge areas and wetlands (especially around Lone Lake and Goss Lake), rare habitat, large areas of forest, wildlife habitat, and unstable slopes.

8.3.2.1.11 Bayview Area

This area of South Whidbey contains important aquifer recharge areas and wetlands.

8.3.2.1.12 South Whidbey

South Whidbey includes important aquifer recharge areas, wetlands, critical shoreline, unstable slopes, and habitat of local importance.

8.3.2.1.13 Livingston Bay

This shoreline area on Camano Island includes some important aquifer recharge areas and wetlands that have been protected. This area is also identified as Tier 1 in the county Salmon Recovery Plan.

8.3.2.1.14 Four Springs

The area around the Four Spring Lake Preserve has some wetlands and important aquifer recharge areas.

8.3.2.1.15 Central Camano

There are wetlands habitat and smaller aquifer recharge areas between Elger Bay Trust Land, Camas Beach State Park, and Camano Island State Park, and is highlighted is for expanding these three larger protected areas.

8.3.2.1.16 Camano Aquifer Recharge Area

Camano Island has large aquifer recharge areas northwest of Tillicum Beach.

8.3.2.1.17 South Camano

The southern end of Camano Island contains rare habitat and plant communities, feeder bluffs with unstable slopes, some smaller aquifer recharge areas, and wetlands.

8.3.3 Habitat Quality Rating Criteria

Before acquiring new land for parks and/or habitat conservation areas, Island County should consider the habitat quality of the site. Below are descriptions of each habitat type, along with criteria, to rate the habitat's quality as high, medium, or low for purposes of acquisitions.

8.3.3.1 CONIFER FOREST

Conifer forest refers primarily to upland temperate coniferous forest communities with climax associations dominated by Douglas fir, western hemlock, and western red cedar. Due to logging history, many of these forests are presently dominated by deciduous tree species, particularly red alder and bigleaf maple.

High Quality

- Older aged forests (>80 years) with higher proportions of conifers
- Rare species present
- Large scale (over 50 acres)
- Connected to other forests, natural areas, or water bodies
- Few or no invasive species, especially English ivy

Medium Quality

- Younger forests (40-80 years) with mixed conifers and hardwoods
- Moderate scale (25-50 acres)
- Common species
- Near other forests, natural areas, or water bodies
- Manageable levels of invasive species

Low Quality

- Regenerating forests (5-40 years,) mostly hardwoods or brush
- Small scale (< 25 acres)
- Isolated patch
- Dominated by invasive species

8.3.3.2 Grassland

Grassland includes native prairies and/or non-native meadows. Native prairies were historically dominated by bunchgrasses, particularly Romer's fescue. Flowering perennials are often visually dominant, and include Indian paintbrush, fritillaria, iris, lupine, and fawn lily. Non-native meadows include hay fields and pastures that may or may not have once been native prairies.

High Quality

- Native prairie plants comprise 50% of flora
- Endemic or listed species are present (e.g. golden paintbrush)
- > 5 acres
- Connected to or near other prairies
- Limited invasive species, particularly Scott's broom

Medium Quality

- Native prairie remnants
- Endemic or listed species recorded in past
- 1-5 acres
- Near other prairies or good environmental education opportunity
- Manageable invasive species

Low Quality

- No native prairie present
- No record of listed species in past
- 1 acre or smaller patch
- Isolated
- Overrun by invasive species, particularly broom

8.3.3.3 Wetlands

Wetlands are emergent fresh or saltwater marsh, willow scrub, forested swamps, peat bogs.

High Quality

- All or mostly native species
 - Natural hydrology is intact
 - > 5 acres
 - Connected to other natural areas, or water bodies
- A. Few or no invasive species, particularly reed canary grass and knotweed

Medium Quality

- Some native species
- Hydrology functional
- < 5 acres
- Near other natural areas
- Manageable invasive species

Low Quality

- No or few native species
- Hydrology severely altered
- < 3 acres
- Isolated
- Overrun with invasive species, particularly reed canary grass or knotweed

8.3.3.4 Freshwater habitats

Freshwater habitat includes rivers, creeks, ponds, and lakes.

High Quality

- Salmon bearing natural stream or lake (or other important species)
- High water quality, no or few point source pollutants
- Intact riparian vegetation
- Linked to other aquatic habitats upstream and down
- Few or no invasive aquatic species

Medium Quality

- Historic salmon habitat (or other important species)
- Moderate water quality, few to moderate point sources
- Some intact riparian vegetation
- Linked to downstream aquatic habitats
- Low levels of invasive aquatic species

Low Quality

- Unnatural water body (i.e. reservoir)
- No history of salmon or other important species
- Impaired water quality, multiple point pollution sources
- Damaged or destroyed riparian vegetation
- Not linked to other aquatic habitats
- High levels of invasive aquatic species

8.3.3.5 Saltwater (Shoreline) Habitats

Saltwater habitat includes shorelines, tidal flats, beaches, bluffs, inlets.

High Quality

- Important wildlife species use (marine mammals, seabirds, fish)
- Unique vegetation communities (kelp, seagrass, salt marsh)
- Well connected to inland habitats
- Absence of built facilities (docks, riprap, roads)
- Absence of invasive species

Medium Quality

- Past recorded use by important species
- Native vegetation dominates
- Near inland habitats
- Small amount of built facilities
- Manageable number of invasive species

Low Quality

- No recorded use by important species
- Non native vegetation dominates
- Isolated from inland habitats
- Large amount of built facilities
- Large amount of invasive species

8.3.3.6 Oak Woodlands

Oak woodland includes groves and savannas.

High Quality

- Older aged woodlands or trees (>80 years)
- Rare species present
- Over 10 acres
- Connected to other habitats, natural areas, or water bodies
- Few or no invasive species

Medium Quality

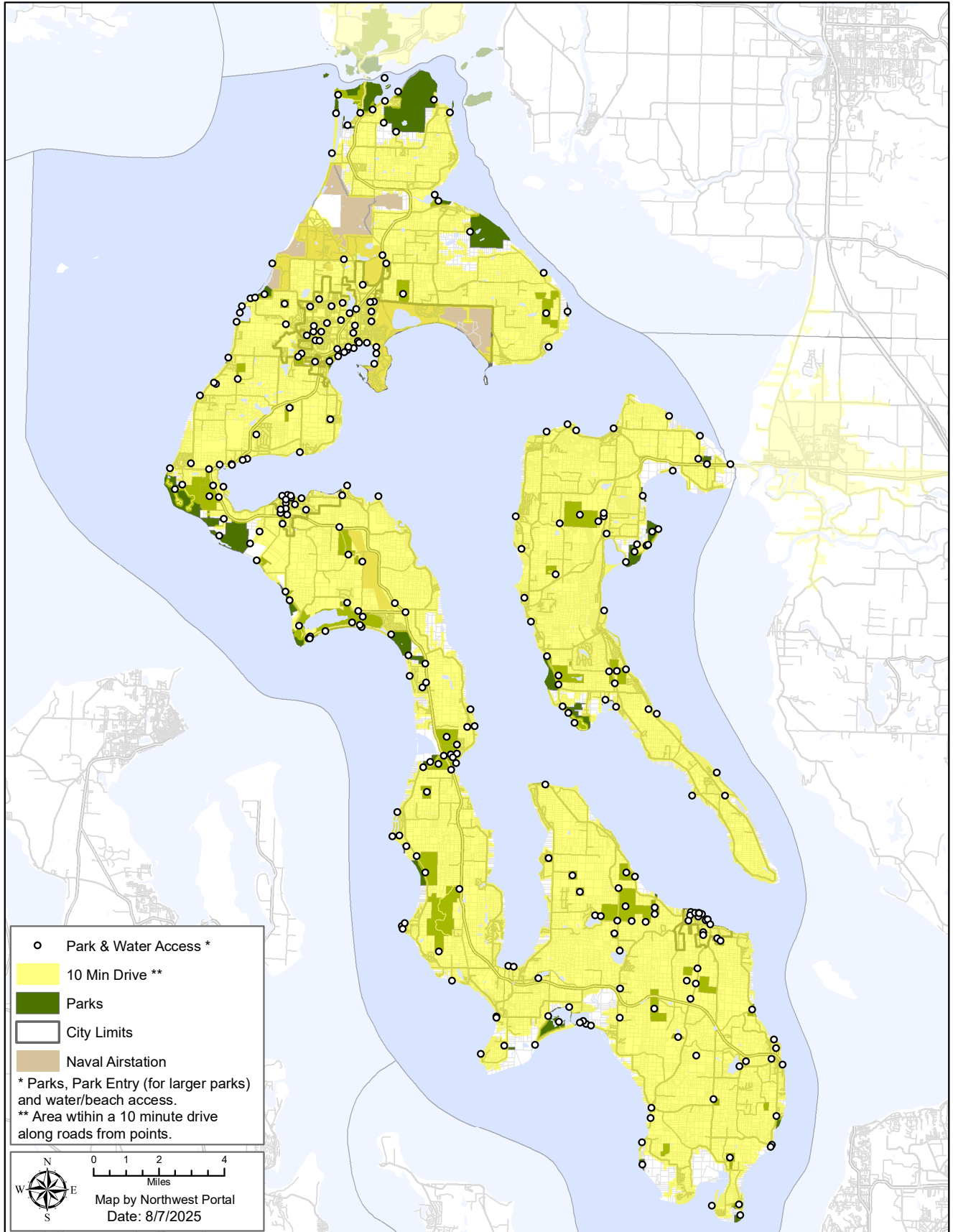
- Younger woodlands or trees (40-80 years) with conifers and hardwoods
- < 10 acres
- Common species
- Near other natural areas
- Manageable levels of invasive species

Low Quality

- Regenerating stands (5-40 years,) mostly hardwoods or brush
- < 5 acres
- Isolated patch
- Dominated by invasive species

8.3.4 Recreation Needs

Providing quality outdoor recreation opportunities is as important as providing quality habitat areas. The most critical needs, highly prioritized County- wide, are for water access and trail activities. A variety of other outdoor recreation needs were identified through the public involvement process.



8.3.4.1 Geographic Needs Analysis

Two critical needs were identified and evaluated using a GIS access analysis that are integral to the provision of outdoor recreation in Island County, and are primary recreation needs for all residents. All County residents should have beach access and an opportunity for a nature walk within 20 minutes from home.

GIS data was used to map service areas around sites that provide beach access or existing trails was based on a 3-mile travel distance.

8.3.4.1.1 Nature Trails

Combining protected habitat with public access, Island County residents most desired nature trails defined as a hard or soft-surfaced trail that provides at least a one-mile walk in nature.

8.3.4.1.2 Beach Access

Island County residents indicated public water access is desired that includes more than just a road end, boat ramp, or viewpoint, but places where residents can touch the water and engage in beachfront recreation activities, such as boating, clamming, fishing, beach strolling, wading, etc. that is at least one acre in size to allow space for activities.

8.3.4.2 Trail Access and Needs

Island County provides unpaved, soft surfaced trails at 15 sites. While most of these sites are larger parks and habitat conservation areas, sites with trails range in size from 0.3 acres (Hidden Trail Camano View) to nearly 600 acres (Putney Woods). Several sites managed by other agencies also provide trail opportunities, including State Parks, National Parks, and to a lesser extent, habitat areas supported by the cities, town, ports, and recreation districts.

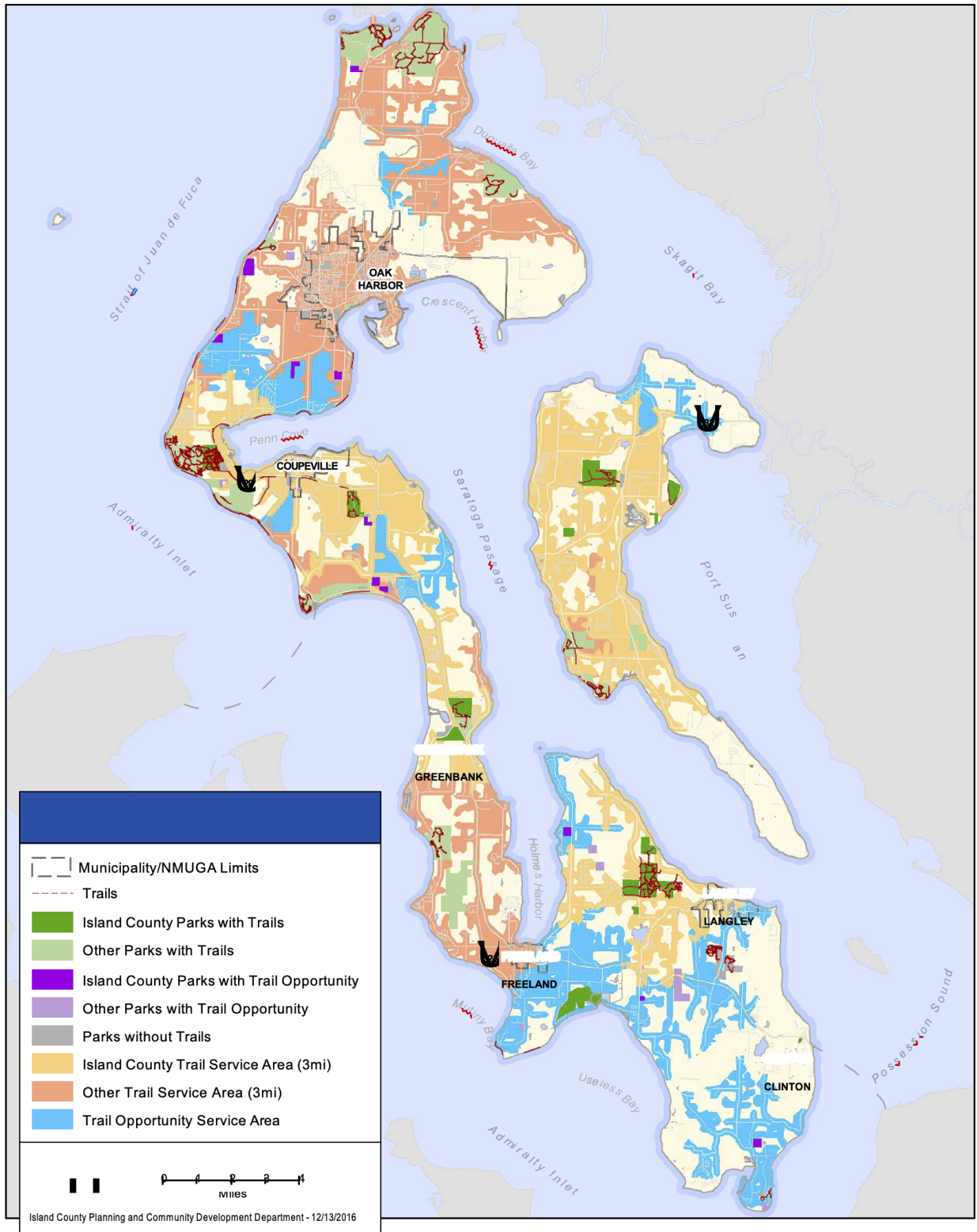
Map 7M illustrates trail access and service areas (following the road network), where residents can engage in a one mile walk in nature. Shorter trail segments, trails at sites too small to incorporate a one-mile trail, and trails in highly developed parks or transportation corridors were excluded from the analysis. As shown on the map, service areas around Island County sites with qualifying trails are shaded in pale orange. However, other jurisdictions also help meet trail needs for a one mile walk in nature. Service areas around other provider's sites with qualifying trails are shaded in pale yellow. White areas on the map indicate gaps in service, or areas where opportunities for trails should be considered.

GIS data was used to map service areas around "trail opportunity areas" which are areas or sites of a sufficient size (more than 10 acres), level of development, and habitat type to perhaps provide a one-mile walk in nature if a trail was appropriate. County-owned sites and sites owned by other agencies were considered as potential opportunities for trail development shown in a hatched purple color on the map.

The remaining white areas on Map 7M reflect unserved areas that are unserved because of limited or no road access or residential development. Trail needs will have to be re-evaluated should these areas develop.

Whidbey Island has several areas where nature trail access is needed.

MAP 7M. Trail Access Opportunities



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8.3.4.2.1 Northeast Whidbey

The area between Crescent Harbor and Skagit Bay near Strawberry Point is unserved and no trail opportunity areas are present.

8.3.4.2.2 Penn Cove North

Several trail opportunity areas are present in this unserved area that include Site E (currently undeveloped), Monroe Landing Trust Land (currently lacks an access road), and/or Scenic Heights Trust Land (is currently farmed and forested).

8.3.4.2.3 Coupeville South

Trails developed in one of two opportunity areas in sites B and D (shaded in purple) would improve service.

8.3.4.2.4 Greenbank/Trillium (East-Central Whidbey)

There are gaps in the road network to the north of Greenbank, to the north of South Whidbey State Park, and around the Trillium Community Forest. However, existing sites are sufficient to provide service if these areas are further developed.

8.3.4.2.5 Freeland South, between Mutiny Bay and Useless Bay

Much of south Whidbey is unserved though the County inventory does not include formal trails at Deer Lagoon Preserve at the 378-acre site that could support a one-mile walk in nature as could the Wahl Road Trust Land.

8.3.4.2.6 Putney Woods North

Areas to the northwest (adjacent to Holmes Harbor) of Putney Woods and Saratoga Woods are unserved. While much of this area lacks road access, trail needs could be met by developing appropriately located trails at Brainers, High Point, and Skyline West Trust Land.

8.3.4.2.7 Bayview Area

The area around the Trustland Trails' site (owned by the South Whidbey Parks and Recreation District) and Marguerite Brons Memorial Dog Park lack access to nature trails though both sites have a trail potential. The dog park at Marguerite Brons should be maintained, which limits opportunities for a nature trail at the site.

8.3.4.2.8 South Whidbey/Clinton

South Whidbey lacks access to a one mile walk in nature although there are two opportunity areas for trail development at Glendale Trust Land and Possession Point State Park. New parks and/or habitat conservation areas are needed around Clinton to address nature trail needs.

8.3.4.2.9 Livingston Bay/North Camano

North Camano is unserved by nearby nature trails although English Boom is in this area and has trails, this site is too small to provide the desired trail opportunity. A new park or habitat conservation areas is needed to address nature trail needs.

8.3.4.2.10 Camano Aquifer Recharge Area & South Camano

The southern end of Camano Island lacks trail access although Walter G. Hutchinson Park is in this area and has trails, this site is too small to provide the desired trail opportunity. A new park or habitat conservation areas is needed to address nature trail needs.

Camano Island has good access to nature trails throughout the central portion of the island although the north and south ends are unserved.

8.3.4.3 Beach Access and Needs

Island County provides some type of water access at 41 sites, other providers own or manage 37 sites for a total of 78 sites that provide water access that include boat ramps, boat docks and marinas, swimming beaches, and other types of water access. 60% of County-owned water access sites are less than one acre in size. In addition, Island County has numerous small beach access points in the inventory that lack support facilities and infrastructure.

Map 7N illustrates service areas around sites that provide beach access that include County parks and habitat conservation areas, as well as similar public sites provided by other jurisdictions. All service areas are mapped in blue, indicating where residents have access to an applicable beach within a 3-mile travel distance from home. White areas on the map indicate where access to qualifying beachfront sites is not provided.

8.3.4.3.1 Northeast Whidbey

The area between Crescent Harbor and Skagit Bay near Strawberry Point is unserved.

8.3.4.3.2 Penn Cove

Gaps on the north side of Penn Cove are caused by gaps in the road network in this area.

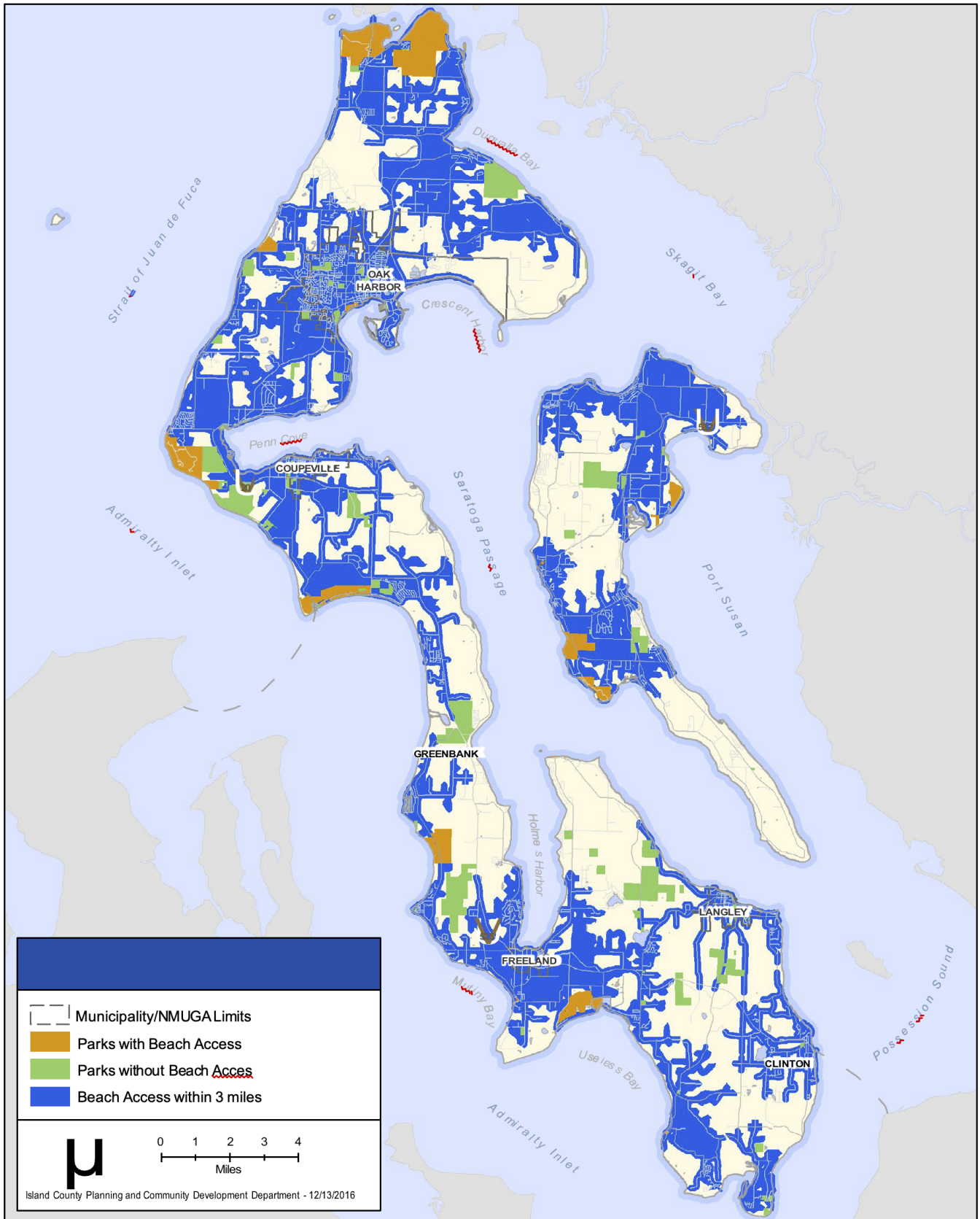
8.3.4.3.3 Greenbank (Central Whidbey)

Much of Central Whidbey Island is unserved, especially on the east coast from Coupeville to Greenbank and nearly to Freeland. The area north of Greenbank on the west coast is unserved as well.

8.3.4.3.4 Freeland South, between Mutiny Bay and Useless Bay

Access to Double Bluff is limited by the road network in this area, which creates a large gap. Limpet Lane Road End (0.1 acres) is in this area but is too small of a site to meet primary recreation needs.

MAP 7N. Beach Access Opportunities



8.3.4.3.5 Putney Woods

The area north and west of Putney Woods, between Holmes Harbor and the Saratoga Passage, lacks beach access. The Baby Island Heights site is only accessible by water.

8.3.4.3.6 South Whidbey/Clinton

The entire eastern shoreline of South Whidbey is unserved by beach access areas except for areas near Possession Point State Park.

8.3.4.3.7 Camano Island

Camano Island lacks beach access at Livingston Bay, Four Springs, and Camano Aquifer Recharge Area.

8.3.4.3.8 Livingston Bay

Parts of the Livingston Bay area lack beach access mainly because of road limitations or for its extensive mudflats, which limit opportunities for beach activities.

8.3.4.3.9 Four Springs

Central Camano on the west side of the island and north of Henry Hollow is unserved because access is limited due to adjacent residential development. A stretch of the central east coast area of the island is also unserved.

8.3.4.3.10 Camano Aquifer Recharge Area

This area lacks beach access.

8.3.4.3.11 South Camano

South Camano is unserved by beach access areas though this highly vegetated, feeder bluff may not provide an opportunity for beach access.

8.3.4.4 Outdoor Recreation Needs

Washington State's Recreation & Conservation Office (RCO) develops a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) every 6 years to help decision-makers better understand statewide recreation issues and to maintain Washington's eligibility for federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) funds.

RCO conducted a series of 12-month diary surveys of a random sample of Washington State residents in 2000, 2006, 2012, 2018, and 2022 to determine the type of indoor and outdoor recreation activities and events residents engaged in over the year including the resident's age, gender, ethnicity, income, and regional place of residence.

The 2022 statewide survey was completed by 6,171 persons and collated and weighted by age, gender, region, race, and income of and weighted accordingly. The survey is within a 95% confidence level with a +/-5% confidence interval. Response by age, gender, region, race/ethnicity, and income varies.

The 2022 RCO SCORP survey recorded what residents 18 years and older participated in of 10 recreation categories consisting of over 88 different activities including the participation rate and number of occasions per year and generalized location of activity by city, county, federal, and tribal land. Island County is in the Islands region that includes Island and San Juan Counties.

The 2022 RCO survey elicited what participants did for recreational activities but not where the activity occurred. Survey participants from Island County may engage in activities but possibly outside of Island County, and conversely participants from other regions may travel to engage in activities in Island County. The survey did not control for user transpositions between regions.

Islands region’s participation rates vary slightly from Washington State partly reflecting the availability of different activities in the county, county resident preferences, and statistical variations between the smaller number of survey respondents for the Islands region compared to the state total.

Even so, there are subtle differences where Islands residents engage less in urban activities like athletics and more in farmers’ markets, shellfishing, and wildlife/nature viewing due to the county’s more rural character.

Annual volumes 2020-2050

Island County’s annual volume of recreation activity is determined by multiplying Washington State’s age-specific participation rates for each of the 18-0, 41-64, and 65+ age groups by the annual occasion or frequency rates by the number of persons projected to be in each age-specific category for the projection years. (Note - Washington State participation rates are used due to the larger statewide sample size statistical accuracy and identified age group collations.)

The following table itemizes the projected total annual volume in 2020, 2050, and the percent of volume increase that will occur between 2020-2050.

Activity	2020	2050	Pct
Scooter riding	109,847	126,502	15.2%
Inline skating	117,149	135,153	15.4%
Volleyball	92,663	106,894	15.4%
Pickleball	161,276	187,793	16.4%
Tennis	131,681	152,288	15.6%
Basketball	136,541	158,014	15.7%
Skateboarding	105,048	120,808	15.0%
Ice sport, hockey	93,710	107,994	15.2%
Golf	200,819	234,089	16.6%
Baseball/softball	154,834	179,467	15.9%
Track	106,911	123,214	15.2%
Ultimate frisbee	83,158	95,586	14.9%
Rugby	78,900	90,589	14.8%
Lacrosse	80,361	92,075	14.6%
Football	91,476	105,552	15.4%
Soccer	146,293	168,950	15.5%
BMX or pump trk	61,625	71,004	15.2%
Model aircraft	123,810	143,451	15.9%
Geocaching	143,265	165,664	15.6%
Yard games	293,571	342,733	16.7%
Disc golf	98,290	113,508	15.5%
Dog park	409,686	478,115	16.7%
Hanging out	804,393	941,524	17.0%

Activity	2020	2050	Pct
Playground	346,279	403,987	16.7%
Picnic, BBQ	470,809	552,656	17.4%
Concert / event	286,952	335,942	17.1%
Garden, farmers	568,244	666,771	17.3%
Splash pad	142,083	164,621	15.9%
Paintball	59,218	67,882	14.6%
Shell fishing	308,228	359,479	16.6%
Fishing in boat	325,017	379,497	16.8%
Fishing bank	274,303	320,128	16.7%
Cultural, historic	398,311	467,994	17.5%
Volunteering	332,324	389,552	17.2%
Gather nature	582,097	682,243	17.2%
Wildlife viewing	14,34,997	1,688,108	17.6%
Sledding, tubing	159,617	185,249	16.1%
Inner tubing	132,518	154,098	16.3%
Surfing	152,201	174,890	14.9%
Snorkel diving	95,015	110,414	16.2%
Canoe, kayak	496,066	580,357	17.0%
Sail boating	171,978	200,160	16.4%
Motorboat skiing	407,117	475,466	16.8%
Swim natural	412,563	481,825	16.8%
Swim pools	250,458	292,113	16.6%
Electric bicycling	232,022	270,721	16.7%
Jog, run on trails	368,724	426,826	15.8%
Jog/run on roads	443,864	514,003	15.8%
Walk on trails	1,675,167	1,966,910	17.4%
Walk on sidewalk	2,055,536	2,414,225	17.4%

The total volume that will occur in 2020 and by 2050, Pct – the percent increase the additional volume between 2020-2050 represents.

Source: 2022 RCO SCORP Survey

The total annual volume of all activities will increase from 16,407,016 occasions in 2020 to 19,167,086 occasions by 2050 or by 2,760,070 additional occasions or by 16.8%. An increase in annual occasions from 2020 to 2050, however, will not be proportionately the same for all activities due primarily to the aging of the county's population and age-related participation rates.

For example, the greatest annual volume and percentage increase will be in walking on sidewalks (358,689 additional occasions from 2020 to 2050 or by 17.4%) and trails (291,744 additional occasions or by 17.4%), and wildlife viewing (253,111 additional occasions or by 17.6%) which are popular with older age groups.

Conversely, the lowest annual volume and percentage increase will be in paintball (8,664 additional occasions from 2020 to 2050 or by 14.6%) and lacrosse (11,715 additional occasions or by 14.6%) which are popular with younger age groups.

Activity location

RCO's 2022 Diary-Based SCORP Survey did not identify the specific location of each individual activity, but the survey did collate location by major activity groups by major park ownership including local parks, school districts, state and federal parks, tribal parks, and unspecified.

The location of an activity group depends on the nature of the activity and the availability of appropriate facilities.

For example, athletic, leisure, and trail-based activities are focused on local parks with 38.3% of all athletics, 38.0% of all leisure, and 32.8% of all trail and road-based activities or close to residential areas.

Comparatively, camping (60.5%) and motorized vehicle excursions (50.3%) are focused on state and federal lands where forests, wilderness, and other attractions are located.

Island County includes facilities in all ownerships that appeal to all activity groups, so it is unlikely to be able to adjust (or reduce) the projected Island County 2020-2050 annual activity volumes significantly.

Specialized activities

Island County should support the following needs in its role as an outdoor recreation provider:

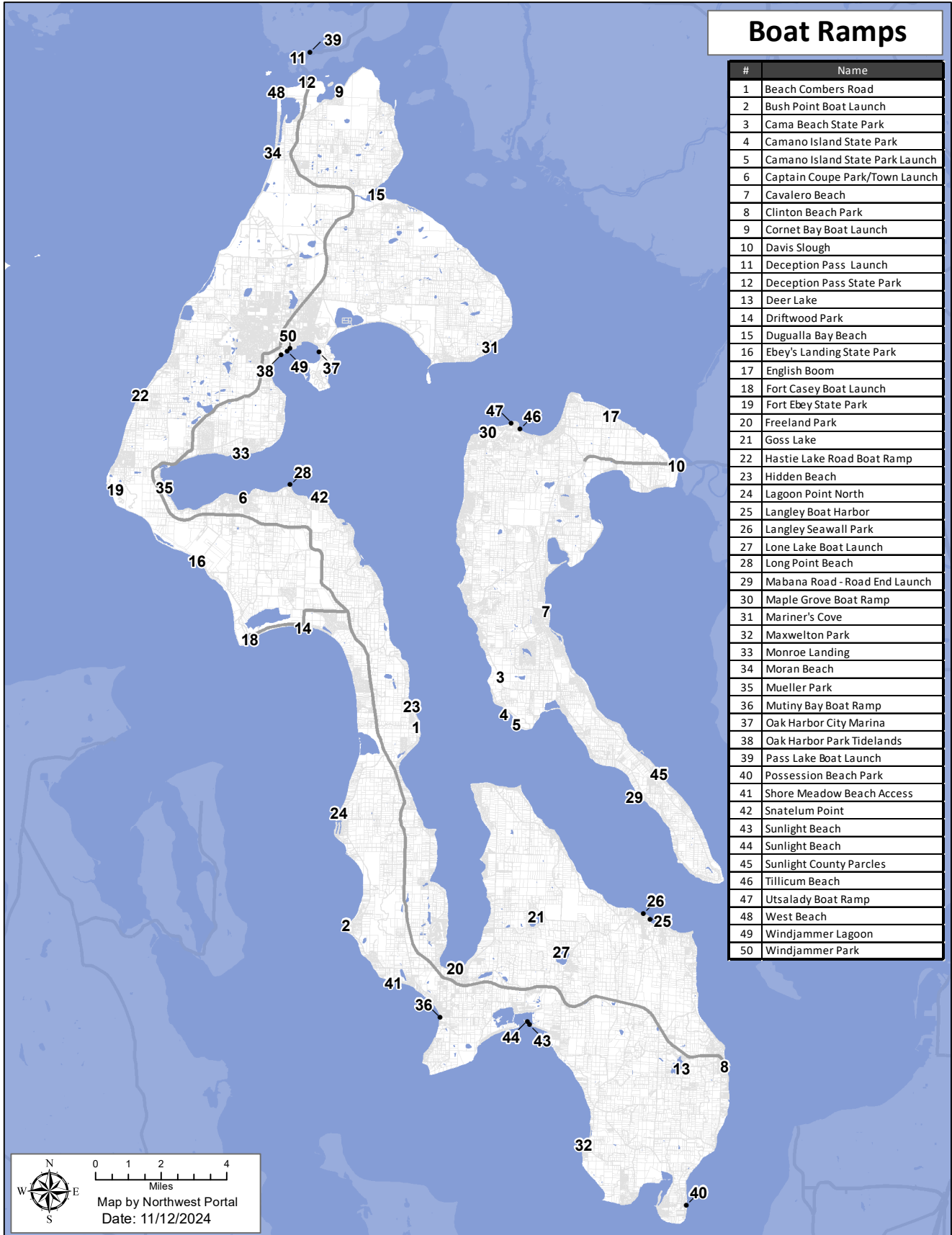
- Boating (Motorized and Non-Motorized Launches)
- Dog Parks
- Camping
- Specialty Trails (Equestrian and Mountain Biking)
- Deer Hunting

8.3.4.4.1 Boating (Motorized and Non-Motorized Launches)

Island County provides 9 boat ramps and 2 docks, other agencies provide 41 boat ramps and 2 docks/marinas for a total of 50 ramps and 4 docks or piers. Island County provides 2 handcarry launch sites, other agencies provide 4 sites, for a total of 6 sites. These facilities are dispersed throughout the County, with the exception of Central Whidbey, north and south of Greenbank.

The 2026-2032 PROS Plan proposes Island County develop 2 more handcarry launch sites and mitigate problems at existing boat ramps to meet demand by 2045.

Park	Boat Ramp	Pier	Handcarry
Island County			
Moran Beach			1
Mariners Cove	1		
Monroe Landing	1		
Coronet Bay		1	
Hastie Lake	1		
Freeland Park	1	1	
Mutiny Bay	1		
Dave Mackie	1		
Cavalero Beach	1		
Maple Grove	1		
Utsalady	1		
Total	9	2	1



8.3.4.4.2 Dog Parks

Island County provides 3 dog park/s and 4 off-leash areas, other jurisdictions 1 dog park and 2 off-leash areas for a total of 4 dog parks and 6 off-leash areas. Almost every Island County park, however, allows dog walking on a leash with waste receptacles. The 2026-2032 PROS Plan proposes Island County add 1 additional dog park facility in an existing park site.

	Park	Dog Park	Off-leash
Island County	Double Bluff		1
	Patmore Pit	1	
	North Greenbank		1
	Marguerite Brons Memorial	1	
	English Boom	1	
	Henry Hollow		1
NWPRD	Clover Valley		1
Oak Harbor	Dog Park	1	
Port Coupeville	Greenbank Farm		1
	Total	4	6

FETCH! (Free Exercise Time for Canines and Humans!), a nonprofit organization, maintains the County’s off-leash parks at Double Bluff Beach, Marguerite Brons Memorial Park, Patmore Pit, and Oak Harbor Dog Park (also known as Technical Park). Two dog parks are owned by other providers and maintained or managed by Island County and FETCH!

Except for the beach park at Double Bluff, all FETCH! parks are fenced and provide a mix of amenities, such as picnic tables, shelters, a rinse station, portable toilets, and sheltered bulletin boards, which are maintained by FETCH! Volunteers and funded by membership contributions.

8.3.4.4.3 Camping

Island County provides 12 tent and 3 RV or a total of 15 campsites at Rhododendron Campground while other agencies, including Washington State Parks, Coupeville, US Navy, and private organizations provide 809 campsites for a total of 824 campsites.

	Campground	Tent	RV	Cabin/Yurt	Biker	Kayak	Total	Group#
Island County	Rhododendron	12	3				15	
	Fairground*		15	30			45	
WA State Parks	Cranberry Lake	147	83	1	5		236	3
	Quarry Pond	7	49	5	1		62	
	Bowman Bay	18	2				20	
	Hope/Skagit Islands					11	11	
	South Whidbey**	46	8				54	60
	Cama Beach			31			31	
	Joseph Whidbey					1	1	
	Fort Ebey		44			6	50	
	Possession Pt					1	1	
	Dugualla					1	1	
	Fort Casey	11	24				35	
Camano Island	88				1	89	100	
Coupeville	Captain Coupe					1	1	
US Navy	Cliffside RV Park***	10	52	4/6			72	30
Private	North Whidbey RV		100				100	
Total		354	399	43	6	22	824	

* Fairgrounds closed during fair.

** Closed indefinitely due to diseased tree hazard to campsites.

*** Cliffside RV Park is open to active and retired military, reservists, authorized DoD civilians, full-time contractors, and their guests by reservation.

Hope and Skagit Islands are boater-only.

The 2026-2032 PROS Plan proposes to add 1 kayak overnight campsite. Island County could play a larger role in meeting the demand for primitive camping by providing dispersed natural camp sites, or canoe and kayak camps that provide a quieter camping experience in nature. Several areas lack kayak campgrounds, including North Camano, East Camano, and Central and South Whidbey.

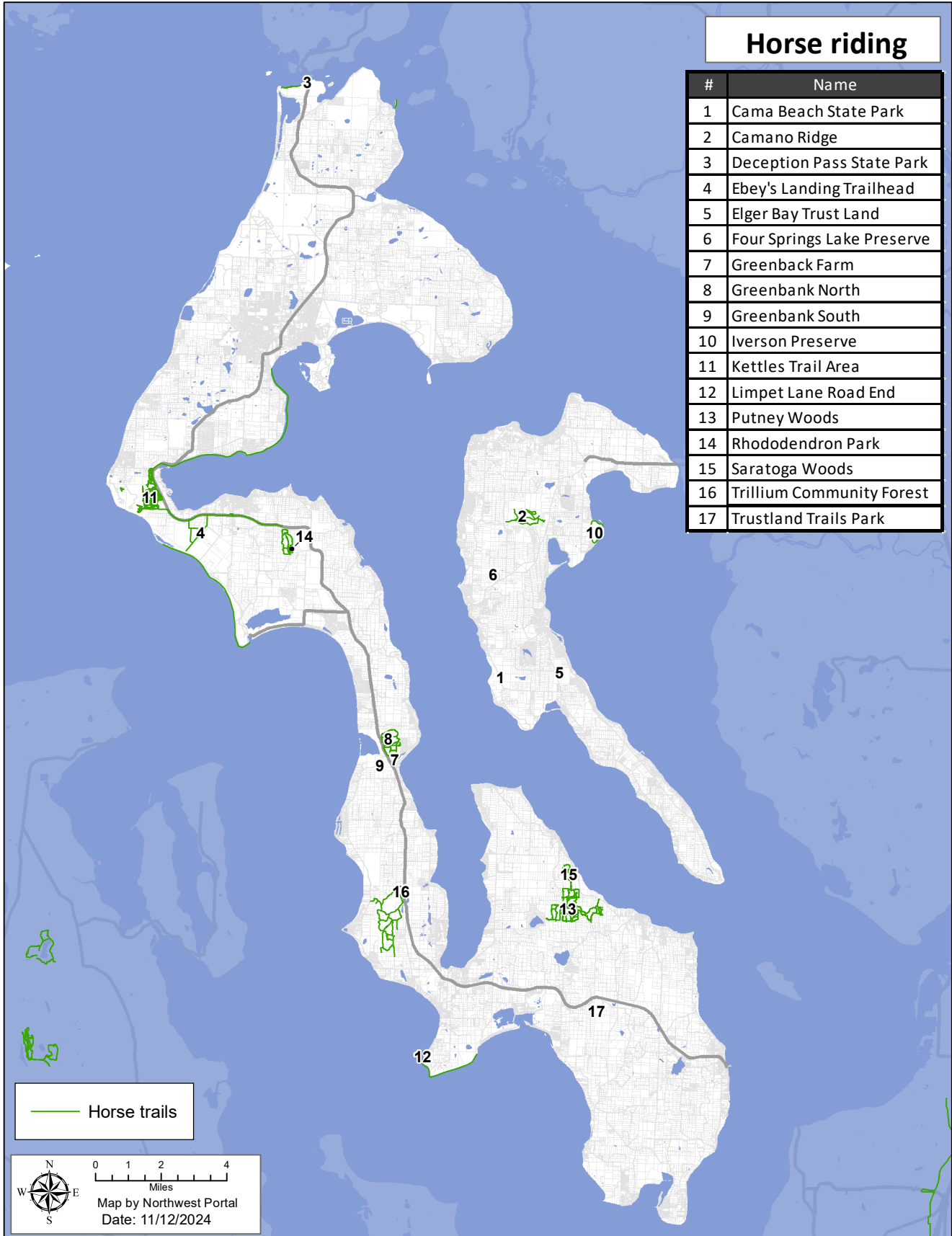
8.3.4.4.4 Specialty Trails (Equestrian and Mountain Biking)

Horseback trail riding are provided at 5 Island County parks including Camano Ridge, Greenbank North, Kettles, Putney Woods, and Saratoga Woods as well as at other trust properties including Trustland Trails, Trillium Community Forest, and Metcalf Trust Trails that are multi-purpose trails for hikers and mountain bikers as well. Several lack equestrian trailheads with room for horse trailer parking, a staging area, hitching rails, or other amenities. There are no similar opportunities on Camano.

Island County	Hike	Bike	Horse	Miles
1 Ala Spit	X			0.5
2 Barnum Point	X			N/A
3 Brainers Land Trust	X			N/A
4 Camano Ridge	X	X	X	3.9
5 Dan Porter Park	X			Na
6 Deer Lagoon Preserve	X			Na
7 Etheyl Taylor Property	X			Na
8 Four Springs Lake Preserve	X			1.6
9 Greenbank North	X	X	X	3.1
10 Greenbank South	X			N/A
11 Hurt Property	X			N/A
12 Iverson Preserve	X			1.7
13 Kettles Trail Area	X	X	X	12.6
14 Limpet Lane Road End	X			N/A
15 Marguerite Brons Park	X			N/A
16 Monroe Landing Trust	X			N/A
17 Patmore Pit Dog Park	X			N/A
18 Putney Woods	X	X	X	13.4
19 Rhododendron Park	X			3.4
20 Saratoga Woods	X	X	X	4.2
21 Scenic Heights Trust Land	X			N/A
22 Swantown Lake	X			0.4
23 Walter G Hutchinson Park		X		N/A
Island County total				44.8

N/A – trail miles not available for these parks.

There are several sites that could be improved to support horse trails, including Greenbank Farm South, and Elger Bay if appropriate trailheads and support amenities were added.



8.3.4.4.5 Hunting

The State of Washington regulates hunting and allows deer hunting in season. Deer hunting is allowed at the Trillium Community Forest, which is owned by the Land Trust, and the US Navy (USN) allows hunting for staff and residents who have access to the Naval Air Station Whidbey Island (NASWI).

	Park	Hunt deer
Island County	Camano Ridge	Yes
	Kettles	Yes
	Putney Woods	Yes
	North Greenbank	Yes
	South Greenbank	Yes
Land Trust	Trillium Community Forest	Yes
US Navy	NASWI*	Yes
Total		7

* Personnel and residents who have access to the base only.

Island County has a hunting history and culture that some residents would like to see preserved. The challenge is to be able to safely maintain this use while also addressing other recreation needs.

The County’s approach is to close sites to other uses when allowing hunting. The parcels need to be large enough to accommodate safe firearms discharge during hunting season.

8.4 FUNDING STRATEGIES

8.4.1 Strategies to Implement Pros Projects

The funding strategy to implement priority projects in the Capital Facilities Plan is multi-faceted and includes the following:

8.4.1.1 General Fund

The General Fund is derived from property and sales taxes, licenses and permits, inter-governmental revenues including state and federal grants, service charges and fees, fines and forfeitures, and other miscellaneous revenues. General funds are used to finance most government operations including staff, equipment, capital facility, and other requirements including Parks Department staff administration, operations, and maintenance.

Under Washington State’s constitution counties may levy a property tax rate not to exceed \$1.80 per \$1,000 of the assessed value of all taxable property within county jurisdictional limits. The total of all property taxes for all taxing authorities, however, cannot exceed 1.0% of assessed valuation, or \$10.00 per \$1,000 of value. If the taxes of all districts exceed the 1.0% or \$10.00 amount, each is proportionately reduced until the total is at or below the 1.0% limit.

In 2001, Washington State law was amended by Proposition 747, a statutory provision limiting the growth of regular property taxes to 1.0% per year, after adjustments for new construction. Any proposed increases over this amount are subject to a referendum vote.

The statute was intended to control local governmental spending by controlling the annual rate of growth of property taxes. In practice, however, the statute can reduce the effective property tax yield to an annual level far below a county's levy authorization, particularly when property values are increasing rapidly.

8.4.1.2 General Levy Rate Referendums

Proposition 747, the statutory provision limiting the growth of regular property taxes to 1.0% per year, can be waived by referendum approval of a simple (50%) majority of Island County's registered voters. Voters can be asked to approve a resetting of the property tax levy rate that would adjust the amount of revenue the county can generate.

The new total revenue that can be generated by a resetting of the rate would be subject to the same 1.0% limitation, however, and the total amount of revenue and the resulting property tax rate would start to decline again in accordance with the Proposition.

However, the adjusted rate and revenue could finance specific capital improvement projects – or programs that involve construction, maintenance, and operations aspects that a majority of the voters are willing to pay for under the adjusted rate.

The resetting of the rate can be permanent, subject to the provisions of Proposition 747. Or temporary, where the rate is adjusted until a specific amount of revenue has been generated to finance a project or program – whereupon the rate reverts to the original or a specified amount defined in the referendum.

8.4.1.3 Special Revenues

Special revenues are derived from state and local option taxes dedicated to specific expenditure purposes, such as the motor vehicle tax, motor excise tax, real estate excise tax (REET), motel and hotel tax (Lodging Tax), public art, criminal justice, paths and trails, convention center, and the like.

Some special revenues may be used to finance limited capital facilities, such as roads or parks, where the local option allows – such as the local real estate excise tax (REET) and/or under special circumstances Motel/Hotel or Tourism Taxes or Stormwater Utility Taxes where a project or program can be expensed as a direct extension or beneficiary of these accounts.

8.4.1.4 Debt Service funds

Debt service funds are derived from a dedicated portion of the property tax or general fund proceeds to repay the sale of Councilmanic (non-voted) bonds and general obligation (voted). Both types of bonds may be used to finance park facility improvements – but not maintenance or operational costs.

Councilmanic (limited or non-voted) bonds - may be issued without voter approval by the Commissioners for any facility development purpose. The total amount of all outstanding non-voted general obligation debt may not exceed 1.5% of the assessed valuation of all county property.

Limited general obligation bonds (GO bonds) - must be paid from general governmental revenues. Therefore, debt service on these bonds may reduce the amount of revenue available for current operating expenditures and the financial flexibility the Commissioners may need to fund annual budget priorities. For this reason, Councilmanic bonds are usually only used for the most pressing capital improvement issues.

Island County may come to depend on voter referendums as a means of financing a larger portion of the capital improvement program, since unlimited obligation bonds are not paid from the property tax subject to the 1.0% limitation.

8.4.1.5 Enterprise funds

Enterprise funds are derived from the user fees and charges levied for utility operations including water and sewer, storm drainage, regional water, solid waste, cemetery, and parks. The enterprise revenues are used to pay operating costs, retire capital facility debt, and plan future replacement and expansion projects. Enterprise funds may be created for a park or recreation activity that has a revenue source sufficient to finance all costs.

8.4.1.6 User fees and charges

Island County may elect to use an increasing array of special user fees, charges, and special assessments to pay facility operating and maintenance capital requirements. The user fee approach may be difficult to impose on facilities that don't have readily identifiable or chargeable users - like some park or trail systems. The approach may be very responsive, however, for facilities and services that have an identifiable user group receiving a direct proportional benefit for the charge - like fairground, picnic, marina, and RV campground facilities.

8.4.1.7 Special legislation

Local government representatives can seek state enabling legislation authorizing new or special revenue sources. Senate Bill 5972 (RCW 82.46) is an example of one possible legislative solution. The 1982 bill gave county governments the option of adding an additional 0.0025% increment to the real estate excise tax (REET) for the sole purpose of financing local capital improvement projects including parks, utilities, and other infrastructure except governmental buildings. Like bonds, Senate Bill 5972 funds may not be used to finance park operation and maintenance requirements.

8.4.1.8 Washington State grants

Washington State, through the Resource Conservation Office (RCO) funds and administers several programs for parks and recreation, and non-motorized transportation and trails purposes using special state revenue programs including the following examples:

Endangered Species Act (ESA) - a Department of Ecology administered water quality program provides grants for up to 75% of the cost of water quality/fish enhancement studies. Referendum 39 monies can be applied to park and open space developments that propose to restore, construct, or otherwise enhance fish producing streams, ponds, or other water bodies.

Washington Wildlife Recreation Program (WWRP) - provides funds for the acquisition and development of conservation and recreation lands. The Habitat Conservation Account of the WWRP program provides funds to acquire critical habitat, natural areas, and urban wildlife categories. The Outdoor Recreation Account of the WWRP program provides funds for local parks, state parks, trails, and water access categories.

Capital Projects Fund for Washington Heritage - initiated on a trial basis in 1999, and since renewed, provides funds for the restoration and renovation projects for historical sites and buildings by local governments and nonprofit agencies. The Heritage Resource Center (HRC) administers the program.

Boating Facilities Program - approved in 1964 under the state Marine Recreation Land Act, the program earmarks motor vehicle fuel taxes paid by watercraft for boating-related lands and facilities. Program funds may be used for fresh or saltwater launch ramps, transient moorage, and upland support facilities.

Aquatic Lands Enhancement Act (ALEA) - initiated on a trial basis in 1985, and since renewed and expanded, uses revenues obtained by the Washington Department of Natural Resources from the lease of state-owned tidal lands. The ALEA program is administered by the RCO for the development of shoreline related trail improvements and may be applied for up to 50% of the proposal.

Washington State Public Works Commission - initiated a program that may be used for watercraft sanitary pump-out facilities.

Youth Athletic Facilities (YAF) – provides grants to cities, counties, and qualified nonprofit organizations for the improvement and maintenance of existing, and the development of new athletic facilities. The Community Outdoor Athletic Fields Advisory Council (COAFAC) of the RCO administers the program.

Non-Highway & Off-Road Vehicle Activities Program (NOVA) – provides funding to develop and manage recreation opportunities for users of off-road vehicles and non-highway roads. An allocation (1%) from the state Motor Vehicle Fuel Tax (MVFT) and off-road vehicle (ORV) permit fees fund the program. NOVA funds may be used for the planning, acquisition, development, maintenance, and operation of off-road vehicle and non-highway road recreation opportunities.

Firearms and Archery Range Recreation Program (FARR) – provides funds to acquire, develop, and renovate public and private nonprofit firearm and archery training, practice, and recreation facilities. The program is funded from a portion of the fees charged for concealed weapons permits.

8.4.1.9 Federal grants

Federal monies are available for the construction of outdoor park facilities from the National Park Service (NPS) Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The Washington State Resource Conservation Office (RCO) administers the grants.

NPS (National Park Service) grants - usually do not exceed \$150,000 per project and must be matched on an equal basis by the local jurisdiction. The RCO assigns each project application a priority on a competitive statewide basis according to each jurisdiction's need, population benefit, natural resource enhancements and several other factors.

In the past few years, project awards have been extremely competitive as the federal government significantly reduced the amount of federal monies available the NPS program. The state increased contributions to the program over the last few years using a variety of special funds, but the overall program could be severely affected by pending federal deficit cutting legislation.

Applicants must submit a detailed comprehensive park, recreation, and open space plan to be eligible for NPS funding. The jurisdiction's plan must demonstrate facility need and prove that the jurisdiction's project proposal will adequately satisfy local parks, recreation, and open space needs and interests.

Due to diminished funding, however, RCO grants have not been a significant source of project monies for county or other local jurisdictions in recent years.

TEA21 (Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century) - can be used to finance on and off-road non-motorized trail enhancements along major and minor arterial collector roads or sometimes, within separate trail corridors. The program was adopted in 1993 and is administered by the Regional Transportation Organization on behalf of the US Department of Transportation.

Applicants must demonstrate the proposed trail improvements will increase access to non-motorized recreational and commuter transportation alternatives.

National Recreational Trails Program (NRTP) – is the successor to the National Recreational Trails Act (NRFTA). Funds may be used to rehabilitate and maintain recreational trails that provide a backcountry experience. In some cases, the funds may be used to create new “linking” trails, trail relocations, and educational programs.

8.4.1.10 Environmental impact mitigation – subdivision regulations

Island County subdivision policies can require developers of subdivisions on the county to provide suitably designed and located open spaces, woodland preserves, trail systems, tot lots, playgrounds, and other park or recreational facilities. Such facilities may include major components of the park or recreational system that may be affected by the project’s location or development.

Island County may also consider requiring developers provide acceptable long-term methods of managing and financing maintenance requirements. Attractive management systems could include:

Ownership by a private organization - like a tennis, swimming, or golf club, who assumes responsibility for all maintenance responsibilities and costs,

Ownership by a homeowners or common property owners’ association (HOA) - who may contract maintenance responsibilities and assess property owner’s annual costs, or

Dedication of property - to Island County who assumes maintenance responsibilities using county funds.

Island County should not accept title and maintenance responsibility unless the land or facility will be a legitimate park or recreation or open space element that may be supported using public financing. Island County may be contracted by any of the other agencies to provide or oversee a maintenance contract on the owner’s behalf provided all Island County costs are reimbursed by an approved method of local financing.

8.4.1.11 Growth impact fees

Island County could adopt a park growth impact fee in accordance with the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA). A park impact fee could apply to all proposed residential, commercial, and industrial developments in the county as a means of maintaining existing park, recreation, and open space levels-of-service (ELOS).

The ordinance could estimate the impact each development project has on park, recreation, and open space facilities within the project’s service zone and make provisions for setting aside the resources, including lands or monies, necessary to offset the project’s park facility impacts.

The dollar value of the project’s park, recreation, and open space impact can be offset by the project developer of an amount equal to the combined facility acquisition and development costs that Island County would incur to maintain the same existing level-of-service (ELOS).

8.4.1.12 Facility user fees and charges

Island County could charge an array of special user fees, charges, and special assessments to pay facility operating and maintenance capital requirements. Proposals to recover recreation program costs could be augmented with additional or higher user fees on picnic shelters, meeting rooms, campgrounds, public gathering areas, and other facilities.

Island County could also increase the number of activities subject to user fees and charges and use the proceeds to purchase land, develop, operate, and maintain facilities where all costs are reimbursed by the revenue obtained. Essentially, Island County would become a facility developer/operator providing whatever facilities or services the market will support from user revenue.

User fees have and could be used to provide facilities for park and recreation activities whose profit margins are too low to sustain commercial operations or whose benefiting user group may extend beyond county boundaries. Possible user fee financed facilities could continue to include recreational vehicle parks and tent campgrounds, and any other facility where demand is sizable enough to warrant a user fee financing approach.

In essence, the market determines which facility's revenues equal costs, and thereby, which programs Island County would provide on a direct costs/benefit basis. While important, this source of finance will likely never pay full costs for all programs, or any operation, maintenance, or development costs.

Some programs designed for youth and family activities, may never generate fees large enough to finance full costs and will require Island County to determine to what extent the public benefits merit the subsidized fee revenues.

The user fee approach may also be difficult to impose on facilities that don't have readily identifiable or chargeable users - like some park or trail systems. The approach may be very responsive, however, for facilities and services that have an identifiable user group receiving a direct proportional benefit for the charge.

8.4.1.13 Conservation Futures (CF) (RCW 84.34.240)

RCW 84.34.210 authorizes any county, city, town, metropolitan park district, metropolitan municipal corporation, or nonprofit historic preservation corporation as defined in RCW 84.34.250 to acquire open space, land, or rights to future development by purchase, gift, grant, bequest, devise, lease, or otherwise, except by eminent domain, the fee simple or any lesser interest, development right, easement, covenant, or other contractual right necessary to protect, preserve, maintain, improve, restore, limit the future use of, or otherwise conserve, selected open space land, farm and agricultural land, and timberland as such are defined in Chapter 84.34 RCW for public use or enjoyment.

Such entity may acquire such property for the purpose of conveying or leasing the property back to its original owner or other person under such covenants or other contractual arrangements as will limit the future use of the property.

8.4.1.14 Special Use Agreements

Special property agreements can often be used instead of property purchases to secure public use rights for land or property at no cost or a nominal fee, particularly where the possible public use is of benefit to the private landowner. Some forms of special use agreements can provide favorable tax benefits if the use agreement can be shown to have an assigned value.

Island County could expand the use agreement concept to include complete development, operation, or maintenance responsibilities. Package lease agreements will usually provide more effectively maintained facilities than possible where Island County must staff specialized, small work crews.

Sometimes package lease agreements covering use and maintenance aspects may be the only way of resolving an equitable agreement with the private ownership. This may include trails on utility corridors where the ownership may prefer to control development and maintenance activities, and Island County may prefer to avoid any implied responsibility or liability for the utility worthiness that Island County's maintenance of a trail system could imply.

8.4.1.15 Public/Private Service Contracts

Private market skills and capital may be employed in a variety of ways including the use of public/private services contracts where a private party can be contracted to operate and maintain a facility for a fixed fee cost. Service contracts can be very efficient where the activities are small, scattered in location, seasonal, expert, or experimental. Service contracts are also relatively easy to initiate or terminate if area demand fails to provide sufficient use or revenue to justify continued operation.

Service contracts may be very flexible and can include agreements with the county, school district or local user groups who can or would be interested in sustaining the activity on a subsidized or sweat-equity basis in exchange for the facility.

8.4.1.16 Public/Private Concessions

Island County could lease a portion of a site or facility to a private party in exchange for a fixed fee or a percentage of gross receipts. The private operator assumes operation and maintenance responsibilities and costs in exchange for a profit. For certain types of facilities, such as enterprise fund account facilities like a golf course, campground, marina, gun and archery range, or community center Island County's portion of the profits may be used to pay facility development and/or operation and maintenance costs at the same or for similar facility developments.

Island County may save considerable monies on concessions where the activities are specialized, seasonal, experimental, or unproven. Concessions can be easily initiated, provide direct user benefit/cost reimbursements, and relieve Island County of a capital risk should market or user interest fail to materialize to at least break-even levels.

Concessionaires could operate a wide variety of park and recreational facilities including boating and bicycle rentals, special group and recreational vehicle campgrounds, athletic field and court facilities, and boar launches and beaches, among others.

8.4.1.17 Public/Private Joint Development Ventures

Island County can enter into an agreement with a private or public developer to jointly own or lease land for an extended period. The purpose of the venture would be to allow the development, operation, and maintenance of a major recreational facility or activity in exchange for a fixed lease cost or a percentage of gross receipts.

The developer assumes development, operation, and maintenance responsibilities, costs, and all market risks in exchange for a market opportunity providing a profitable return not otherwise available. Island County realizes the development of a facility not realized otherwise in exchange for a low minimum capital return and no or very little capital risk.

Joint development agreements represent an ultimate benefit/cost resolution that may also provide public revenue that Island County could use for other development opportunities. Examples include the possible joint development on Island County lands of recreational vehicle campgrounds, seminar retreats, special resorts, golf courses, and gun and archery ranges, among others.

8.4.1.18 Self-help Land Leases

There are instances where an activity is so specialized in appeal or of a service area so broad in scope that it cannot be equitably financed using public funds. Specialized user groups should be provided options for developing or maintaining facilities in ways that account for equitable public cost reimbursements.

Examples include the use of land leases where Island County may lease land at low or no cost where a user group or club assumes responsibility for the development, operation, and maintenance of the facility. The club could provide volunteer help or use club finances to develop, operate and maintain the facility as a means of meeting user benefit/cost objectives.

Land lease agreements could accommodate organized athletics like soccer, baseball, football, softball, and rugby, or very specialized facilities like shooting ranges, archery fields, OHV trails, and ultra-light aircraft parks, among others.

8.4.1.19 Self-help Contract Agreements

Island County can purchase land, develop, operate, and maintain a specialized facility under a negotiated contract agreement where a special interest group agrees to defray all costs in addition to or in lieu of a user fee as a means of meeting user benefit/cost objectives. The agreements can be quite flexible and could contract the city, school district, the user group, another public agency, or a private operator to be developer/operator.

Contract agreements could accommodate a range of more expensive special purpose facility developments including high quality athletic competition facilities for league organizations; and specialized facility developments like shooting ranges and OHV trail systems, or historical or children’s museums, or railroad train excursions when and where the user organization can provide financial commitments.

8.5 GOALS AND POLICIES

The goals and policies noted in this Element describe how Island County Parks will carry out their mission and achieve the community vision for the park system. Taken together, goals and policies can be a means of measuring Island County’s performance in providing recreation opportunities and conserving habitat areas according to their area of focus.

These goals and policies were developed based on input from staff and community members to provide policy direction for the implementation strategies and actions. All goals, policies, strategies, and actions flow from the vision for park and recreation services and advance the County’s area of focus.

Goal 1 Provide a quality, diverse, and sustainable system of park land that effectively balances recreation and habitat conservation needs. Island County is dedicated to ensuring that outdoor experiences in natural environments are accessible to all, regardless of abilities.

PR 1.1 Park land should support the mission and vision of Island County Parks with a preference towards providing outdoor recreation experiences and protecting habitat.

PR 1.2 Provide signature park lands and high-quality recreation facilities that reflect the character of Island County, draw users from throughout the region, and establish an identity/brand for Island County Parks.

PR 1.2.1 Provide attractive and uniform signage at park entrances to improve the branding of Island County Parks.

PR 1.2.2 Improve the image of County parks through sensitive site design and development that reflects Island County’s character.

PR 1.2.2.1 Prior to the development of any new feature or facility, consider its design and placement and ADA access within the park.

PR 1.2.2.2 Prior to the development of any new major facility or park, create a site design (for smaller sites) or site master plan (for larger sites) to help achieve the County’s vision for parks lands of being the best in the state.

PR 1.3 Continue to update the County’s facility inventory to have an accurate count of facilities within all parks, including the length of trails (in linear feet or miles) that are developed and maintained both inside and outside of parks and habitat areas.

PR 1.4 Require recreational uses and development that do not result in significant degradation of habitat, including cumulative degradation.

PR 1.5 Residents of all abilities should have adequate access to “open space” areas. Open spaces include land which contains natural areas, habitat lands, natural drainage features, and/or other environmental, cultural, and scenic resources. Such land should be preserved and provided to residents for recreational use when appropriate. Open spaces should be linked to non- motorized transportation and public transportation.

Goal 2

Provide low impact outdoor recreation opportunities throughout the County increasing access to parks near populated areas such as Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) while emphasizing those that have relatively low impact on the natural environment over others with higher impacts.

PR 2.1 Invest in amenities and facilities that support, ADA access outdoor recreation activities, such as walking, biking, boating, camping, wildlife watching, horseback riding, beach activities, hunting, fishing, clamming, etc.

PR 2.2 Strive to provide areas where people can walk at least 5-10-minutes in nature or within a 10-minute drive from most County residences.

PR 2.3 Provide additional recreation opportunities and ADA facilities that are consistent with the County’s area of focus, such as dog parks, boat ramps, camping, and hunting, in dispersed locations county wide where safe and appropriate opportunities exist to support these activities.

PR 2.4 Provide diverse, non-motorized trail opportunities, including both ADA hard and soft-surfaced trails, water trails, looped trail systems, and trails with variety of lengths and access points consistent with the Island County Non-Motorized Trails Plan. Include appropriate amenities to support a variety of trail uses, including pedestrians, equestrians, bikes, non-motorized watercraft, and other appropriate uses.

PR 2.4.1 Trail development on public lands should be completed through regional collaboration and prioritize linking multimodal transportation, schools, urban development, places of employment, and recreational facilities.

PR 2.4.2 Development of community trails should be completed through collaboration with private landowners and prioritize providing a recreational experience in nature and lining neighborhood and recreational facilities.

PR 2.5 Increase the level and quality of development in park lands, where appropriate, to enhance the County’s image as a premier provider of outdoor recreation opportunities in the Puget Sound area and in Washington State.

PR 2.6 Monitor community demand for additional outdoor recreation services as the population in Island County continues to grow.

PR 2.6.1 When a need or gap is identified, the County will look to develop plans to address these discrepancies by expanding existing recreation facilities, acquiring new land, or coordinating with other agencies or private landowners to meet those needs.

PR 2.7 Evaluate existing sites to determine which sites are suitable for increased facility development. Prioritize projects using the prioritization criteria presented in PR 4.7 and add these projects to the County’s Capital Facilities Plan.

Goal 3 Increase public access to the County’s beaches and shoreline areas, creating recreation opportunities that respect the ecological integrity of the shoreline ecosystem.

PR 3.1 Plan, design, maintain and develop beach access areas for ADA access, walking, beachcombing, fishing, wading, swimming, kayaking, and boating while adhering to the goals and policies set forth in the County’s Shoreline Master Program.

PR 3.2 Inform the public of existing Island County public shore accesses where recreational use does not pose a threat to public health, safety, or the environment. Once a clear County title, a physical location, a viable view, or a viable tidal access is established, the County should identify sites with signs (including from the water side for kayak and canoe pullouts and against motorized boating in sensitive waters) where appropriate and consistent with the most current County’s Non-Motorized Trails Plan and Shoreline Master Program.

PR 3.3 Identify opportunities to increase public waterfront access through the recovery of public road ends where public access is being blocked, provision of swimming beaches, coastal and water vistas and accesses, motorized and non-motorized boat launches, public boat moorage, and water viewpoints while being consistent with goals and policies set forth in the County’s Shoreline Master Program.

PR 3.4 Strive to provide shoreline access for beach activities within a 10-minute drive from most County residences.

Goal 4 Protect and conserve priority habitat, natural resources, open space, and island character. Where appropriate, acquire public access rights or title to lands to improve and expand outdoor recreational opportunities for public enjoyment including ADA facilities, wildlife viewpoints, beach access, trails, boat launches, and other recreational improvements.

PR 4.1 Protect and conserve land that protects habitat and working landscapes that can help recharge aquifers, prevent surface and groundwater pollution, filter sediments, limit air and noise pollution, maintain wildlife habitat and other natural systems, or to address identified recreation needs while avoiding incremental or cumulative habitat degradation.

PR 4.2 Maintain the important ecological functions of park lands, including those provided by wetlands, stream corridors, shoreline systems, and forests.

PR 4.3 Connect park lands by identifying and conserving wildlife habitat corridors, riparian corridors, and protected space along other elongated natural features—where such connections support trail development and connectivity.

PR 4.4 Only accept land donations that support the County’s area of focus, as well as the goals, vision and objectives noted in this Comprehensive Plan Element.

PR 4.5 Foster Island County’s economic vitality by protecting productive resources and park lands that support economic activity in industries such as tourism, agriculture, and forestry.

PR 4.6 Ensure donations from other providers are consistent with the County’s area of focus and can be sustainably managed and maintained with identified funding resources, such as a stipend, long-term stewardship fund, revenue-generation strategy, etc.

PR 4.7 Acquire land using the following criteria:

PR 4.7.1 The site is adjacent to a County-owned park land so that acquisition would create a larger park land and/or the site is adjacent to a trail and will provide a longer trail corridor.

PR 4.7.2 The site is located near park lands owned by other entities. Unlike PR 4.7.1, these parcel must be large (e.g., five acres or more), or contain important habitat, or meet a specific recreational need or wildlife corridor need to justify the County’s role in this area.

PR 4.7.3 Larger sites typically have higher habitat value, greater recreation capacity, and a greater maintenance cost efficiency. The County should avoid acquiring small habitat parcels, unless these sites contribute to a larger protected area, contain important habitat, or provide a wildlife corridor between protected areas. Also, the County should avoid acquiring sites just large enough to address recreation needs, without space to protect habitat.

PR 4.7.4 The County should strive to acquire land that is considered to have a high or medium resource value, to minimize restoration requirements. Habitat quality can be measured by considering factors such as habitat age/maturity, presence of rare species, absence of invasive species, and level of degradation (e.g., development, soil compaction, pollution, impacted vegetation, etc.). A sample habitat quality criterion is presented in this Parks and Recreation Element.

PR 4.7.5 The land uses and quality of habitat on adjacent or nearby parcels should not negatively impact the scenic and aesthetic value and natural character of the site. The County should consider whether adjacent site characteristics or land management practices (e.g., weed control, invasive species removal, erosion and water runoff, soil contamination, etc.) will affect habitat quality on the site being evaluated.

PR 4.7.6 The site meets a need for a 5-10-minute walk in nature (or longer nature trail) or beach access for recreation opportunities.

PR 4.7.7 The site meets another outdoor recreation need, such as a boat ramp, boat launch, dog park, primitive camp, or equestrian and mountain biking trail and trailhead.

PR 4.7.8 The site is well-suited for recreation development, based on site characteristics such as slope, shape, access (motorized and non-motorized transportation), amount of street frontage, amount of non-developable land, water and well availability, existing structures, existing vegetation and soil, etc.

PR 4.7.9 The site has (or has a potential for) access and anticipated site use. Zoning restrictions, neighborhood or community character, and access limitations should all be considered when developing public facilities.

PR 4.7.10 The site is not located within the service area of another town, city, or recreation district. The County should strive to address conservation and recreation needs in areas that are not served by another jurisdiction or viable sponsor including Urban Growth Area (UGA) and Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Development (LAMIRD)

PR 4.7.11 Where a site is adjacent to another jurisdiction the County may partner or support that jurisdiction where it is more effective of efficient for that jurisdiction to protect and manage the site.

PR 4.7.12 If another public agency or non-profit is in a better position to leverage funding for site purchase or a conservation easement, the County may partner or support the agency to protect this land.

PR 4.7.13 If the site is in a service area with outdoor recreation needs, the County should consider collaboration with another provider who would acquire, administer, manage, and maintain outdoor recreation more effectively.

PR 4.7.14 To be considered for acquisition by the Island County Parks Department, a site must satisfy habitat conservation or any proposed outdoor recreation needs.

PR 4.7.15 If a site is in an area where recreation and recreation needs are already met by existing park land, the County should direct its resources to other priority areas where recreation and/or conservation efforts are needed.

PR 4.7.17 The County or other provider is able to pay the annual operating and maintenance costs for the site. The County should avoid providing or accepting from others new park lands where the County is unable to fund site stewardship. If a site is transferred to the County with an operational endowment, this stipend should be on-going or sufficient to cover site land and facility maintenance costs.

PR 4.7.18 The site can be sustainably managed using approved revenue-generating strategies to generate funds to support operations and maintenance. This may include user fees, facility rental fees, leases, and other strategies.

PR 4.7.19 The site does not have management or development restrictions in place that limit desired opportunities for revenue-generation, operation, and management within the scope of the County's purview, administrative capacity, and jurisdiction.

PR 4.7.20 There are no excessive or hidden costs or efforts needed to address site clean-up, structure removal, habitat restoration, the provision of road access, or facility development.

PR 4.7.20 Avoid providing or accepting new parks and habitat areas if the County or other provider is unable to pay for the subsequent annual operating and maintenance costs of facilities at the site.

PR 4.8 Secure access to private lands and private roads for community trail corridors through use licenses, easements, or other agreements using the following criteria:

PR 4.8.1 The corridor provides a recreational experience in nature or links to multimodal transportation, schools, urban development, places of employment, neighborhoods, or recreational facilities.

PR 4.8.2 A site can be acquired with minimal cost by the County such as (e.g. PBRs), donations, or grants.

PR 4.8.3 Construction and maintenance will be performed predominantly by volunteers with specialized assistance from the County as resources permit.

Goal 5. Divest in parks lands that are not in conformance with the County's Comprehensive Plan and states, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Goals.

PR 5.1 Evaluate County lands to determine which sites do or do not support the vision and goals of this Parks and Recreation Element. Consider divestment of public lands that have little value for conservation or outdoor recreation.

PR 5.2 Should an existing County property with resource restrictions (such as a conservation easement) on its title be considered for divestment, the County shall honor those restrictions. Additionally, should any existing County property with significant conservation value (that does not have any encumbrance on the title) be considered for divestment, the County should consider placing conservation restrictions on the title before divestment.

PR 5.3 Prior to any divestment of County land, the County should consider transfer of those lands to agencies that will maintain the land for uses that meet recreation or habitat needs which conform to the County's Comprehensive Plan or its stated Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Goals including, but not limited to, transferring recreation sites to park districts or transferring habitat land without potential for recreational use to a land trust to protect.

PR 5.4 Create a transition plan for sites or facilities which do not fit within the County's Comprehensive Plan or its stated Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Goals Identify which sites (if any) can be sold or immediately transferred to other jurisdictions, and which sites should be held until a long-term transition is feasible.

PR 5.5 Evaluate funding, actions, and projects by their fit with the County's Comprehensive Plan or its stated Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Goals defined area of focus. Pursue projects that support this area of focus and re-evaluate plans that do not.

PR 5.7 Create site master plans for properties not consistent with the County's area of focus and parks that are not accepted by other jurisdictions. Involve site users, nearby residents, and interest groups to create a new plan or design that notes what new facilities will be developed at these sites, when older facilities not consistent with the County's area of focus age or deteriorate to the point where they are unsafe for future use.

Goal 6 **Develop stewardship and maintenance programs that cost-effectively protect County assets, emphasize sustainable methods and design, support habitat quality, respond to local needs, and sustain resources for future generations.**

PR 6.1 Consider a higher level of habitat stewardship to address invasive species removal, natural area restoration, and habitat preservation needs.

PR 6.2 Increase the level of land stewardship at all County-owned sites. The County should evaluate and budget for habitat stewardship needs. The County should use the funding strategies outlined in this Parks & Recreation Element as a starting point in calculating a maintenance budget for habitat stewardship.

PR 6.3 As part of stewardship efforts, evaluate the condition of natural lands within County parks and habitat conservation areas. Identify which sites would benefit most from restoration efforts.

Based on available resources, target sites where restoration is achievable, since maintenance needs will decrease after the ecosystem is stabilized. Maintain other sites at a minimum level for hazard mitigation.

Goal 7 **Identify, secure, and develop adequate funding sources to develop, operate, maintain, and sustain County parks, habitat, and recreation facilities.**

PR 7.1 Actively seek innovative funding methods to retain financial flexibility and increase facility services.

PR 7.2 Consider and maintain diverse funding sources to meet community needs and provide high-quality parks and facilities. Consider impact fees; real estate excise taxes (REET); tourism taxes; conservation futures funds; bonds and levies; grants, donations, and sponsorships; facility/site use fees and rentals; land leases; sustainable resource harvesting; concessions and vendor agreements; and other options that may be available in the short and/or long term.

PR 7.3 Reinvest revenue and/or resources obtained from park lands, back into recreation and habitat conservation services, whether directly or through a dedicated fund for system-wide conservation and recreation services. This includes any proceeds from facility/site rentals, user fees, leases, vendor or concessionaire agreements, and land divestment (sale or trade). This applies to all lease agreements, user fees, vendor fees, facility and site rentals, etc.

PR 7.4 Increase the County's maintenance investment in terms of funding and staffing to significantly improve the maintenance level of service for parks and recreation facilities.

PR 7.5 Revise the accounting and budgeting process for collecting and spending revenues generated through the outdoor recreation system. Rather than establishing independent funds for specific sites (such as Cornet Bay Dock) or projects (such as Camano Island boat ramp improvements), create two funds: Camano Park/Habitat Enhancement Fund and Whidbey Park/Habitat Enhancement Fund.

PR 7.6 Increase the level of facility maintenance and land stewardship at the most-frequently used County-owned sites.

PR 7.8 Implement low-maintenance landscaping techniques in all existing and new park sites.

PR 7.10 Create a transition strategy that defines an appropriate level of maintenance investment in facilities that do not support the County's area of focus.

PR 7.11 Renovate or replace capital facilities that support the County's area of focus, as well as the goals, vision and objectives noted in this Parks & Recreation Element.

PR 7.12 If operating and maintenance cost restrictions prohibit capital construction then non-capital alternatives must be pursued.

PR 7.13 Create strategies or a business plan for facilities, such as Freeland Hall and Four Springs Reserve which are not consistent with the County's area of focus, to recover costs sufficient to support their maintenance and operations.

Goal 8 Foster partnerships and county-wide collaboration among park and habitat providers to improve the provision of habitat conservation and recreation services.

PR 8.1 Support a comprehensive, county-wide park and habitat system that integrates Island County lands within a larger system supported by multiple jurisdictions, organizations, and public and private agencies.

PR 8.2 Continue to cooperate with State and Federal agencies, local governments, special purpose districts, non-profits and other organizations to achieve the vision and goals set forth in this Parks & Recreation Element.

PR 8.3 Acquire and manage park lands in ways that complement other public and private recreation and conservation efforts.

PR 8.4 Continue to coordinate with other County departments and jurisdictions in consolidating and defining the methods to identify, retain, and conserve natural lands and habitat areas within the County.

PR 8.5 Collaborate with others to promote Island County as a recreation destination, using a variety of public relations and marketing techniques to increase awareness of the County's parks and recreation facilities.

PR 8.6 Partner with community groups, concessionaires, and others to provide appropriate programming and outdoor events consistent with the vision and goals in this Parks & Recreation Element. This may include but is not limited to low impact outdoor community events, environmental education, campground programs, facility-based programming (e.g., related to boating, hunting, trail use), etc.

PR 8.7 Formalize the County's role with ongoing and new potential partners. There are many other providers in Island County who play a variety of roles in conserving habitat and providing recreational opportunities. If one of these providers is better positioned to meet identified needs, let them. If a partnership or collaborative effort is proposed with Island County, clearly define the County's role according to its area of focus including spelling out financial and management responsibilities for both parties.

PR 8.8 Coordinate or partner with non-profit groups, vendors, businesses, or other agencies to provide outdoor recreation programming consistent with the County's area of focus.

PR 8.9 Cooperate with other public, private agencies, and private landowners to protect habitat and provide recreation opportunities before the most suitable sites are lost to development.

PR 8.10 Explore partnerships with vendors, for-profit concessionaires, and non-profit groups to provide programs, events, and services consistent with the County's area of focus, vision and goals of this Parks & Recreation Element.

Goal 9

Engage Island County residents in the planning and stewardship of parks, trails, and conservation areas, and provide effective communication to improve awareness and support of County services.

PR 9.1 Provide opportunities for public input in park planning and design decisions to keep tabs on local park and recreation preferences, needs, and trends.

PR 9.2 Promote volunteerism to enhance community support and stewardship of parks, recreation facilities, community trails, and natural resources. Encourage citizen involvement and participation in maintaining, improving, and restoring parks, trails, and natural areas.

PR 9.3 Increase volunteer coordination and administration to ensure that volunteers have sufficient direction, support and recognition.

PR 9.4 Enhance customer service and increase site use by making information more accessible to residents and visitors.

PR 9.5 Prior to instituting park user fees, create press releases, website information, and email notifications with messages about "Investing in Our Parks." Create a process where residents can send their recommendations regarding specific small-scale improvements that are needed (and fit the County's area of focus). Also, create an online volunteer coordination and recruitment tool where volunteers join a work party to help with identified improvements. The goal of the public information effort is to allow residents to be involved in and see the positive changes that these new funding initiatives will bring.

PR 9.6 When funding is available, provide staff time for volunteer coordination, direction, recognition, and general involvement. Initially, this may be a part-time position that eventually expands.

Ensure that volunteers are not engaging in undirected activities, such as new trail development, without permission or guidance to do so.

PR 9.7 Increase volunteer coordination through more specifically defined volunteer programs and opportunities, including written volunteer guidelines for specific tasks, such as habitat restoration, trail building and site maintenance.

PR 9.8 Plan a larger effort to advertise and market County sites as tourism destinations for their scenic value, outdoor facilities, camping opportunities, event capacity, etc. Replace the marketing coordinator position at Four Springs Lake Preserve with a system-wide marketing specialist who oversees all facilities.

PR 9.9 Establish an online system for campsite and other facility reservations. Other agencies use online reservation providers that are paid for by the user.

PR 9.10 Incorporate opportunities for historical and environmental interpretation into the park system to educate the public about the local, regional, and ecological context.

TRANSPORTATION



Island County Comprehensive Plan

2025 Periodic Update

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TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Transportation Element provides the framework to guide the growth and development of the County's transportation infrastructure. It also integrates land use and transportation by ensuring existing and future developments are adequately supported by the transportation system. The Transportation Element addresses the development of a balanced, multimodal transportation system for both the County's rural and urban areas by recognizing the regional nature of the transportation system and the need for continuing interagency and adjoining Counties coordination (i.e. state highways, ferries, bridges, aviation facilities, and future emerging modes) for residents, visitors, and freight.

The Comprehensive Plan recognizes that economic development, housing, public safety, and climate resilience all depend on reliable regional connections to and from the islands.

The Transportation Element establishes the County's goals and policies for developing the transportation system within the County. The Transportation Element is based on a 2024 study of the existing transportation network, combined with projections of future growth and transportation needs in 2045. The transportation element is comprised of five sections:

1. Goals and Policies
2. Existing Condition of Transportation Facilities
3. Travel Forecasts Evaluation
4. Transportation Systems Plan
5. Financing Program

The Transportation Element is intended to serve as a guide for making transportation decisions to address both short- and long-term needs. To meet Growth Management Act (GMA) requirements, the Transportation Element must identify existing transportation system characteristics, establish standards for multimodal levels of service, and identify existing and future deficiencies based on land use growth projections. The Transportation Element also discusses roadway mobility and accessibility needs, identifies improvements necessary to enhance safety, bicycle and pedestrian travel, and public transit. Consistent with the other elements of the Comprehensive Plan, the Transportation Element establishes a policy framework for making decisions consistent with the County's vision and describes a strategy for accomplishing the County's vision over the 20-year planning horizon.

Plan Development

The purpose of the 2025 Transportation Element is to provide an update to the existing Transportation Element by identifying and evaluating the transportation improvement plans for the County through the years 2026 to 2045.

The plan was developed to address future land use growth and identify multimodal transportation needs to support the expected growth. The plan is needed to satisfy Growth Management Act (GMA) requirements and to update the County's transportation improvement projects funding program. The following sections summarize the regulatory setting and regional planning efforts that guided the development of the Transportation Element.

Growth Management Act Requirements

Under the Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.070), referred to herein as the GMA, the Transportation Element is required to assess the needs of a community and determine how to provide appropriate multi-modal transportation facilities for current and future residents. The Transportation Element must contain:

- Inventory of existing facilities;
- Assessment of future facility needs to meet current and future demands;
- Multi-year plan for financing proposed transportation improvements;
- Forecasts of traffic for at least 10 years based on adopted land use plan;
- Multimodal Level of service (LOS) standards for arterials and public transportation, including actions to bring deficient facilities into compliance;
- Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies, and;
- Identification of intergovernmental coordination efforts.

Additionally, under GMA's Concurrency Mandate, development may not occur if the development causes the transportation facility to decline below the County's adopted level of service standard unless existing infrastructure exists or strategies to accommodate the impacts of the development are made concurrently with the development; specifically the impacts must be mitigated within six years of the development's completion. This mandate extends to include state highways in counties consisting of islands, which applies to Island County.

Finally, the Transportation Element must include a reassessment strategy to address how the plan will respond to potential funding shortfalls.

Countywide Planning Policies

The GMA also requires that counties adopt Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) to guide and coordinate issues of regional significance. The Island County Department of Planning and Community Development developed CPPs in conjunction with the City of Oak Harbor, the City of Langley and the Town of Coupeville in 2024-2025. The policies are anticipated to be adopted by each agency in 2025. Section 3.8 of the CWPPs addresses transportation and includes nine specific policies that are intended to ensure that the transportation system evolves in a coordinated manner to best serve the diverse land uses in Island County, both now and in the future. Island County adopted 2025 Countywide Planning Policies on March 26, 2024.

1 GOALS AND POLICIES

Island County has developed broad goals, along with specific policies, to provide the framework for the Transportation Element. Goals and policies established through feedback solicited at public meetings conducted in 2024 and public input from the online survey and open house, and meetings with the Board of Island County Commissioners and the Island County Planning Commission. The statements were developed to be consistent with the statewide goals articulated in the [Washington Transportation Plan \(WTP 2025\)](#), Island Regional Transportation Planning Organization (IRTPO), and Island County's Countywide Planning Policies¹

¹ Island County Countywide Planning Policies. March 26, 2024 in [Ordinance No. C-08-24 PLG-003-24](#)

Goals are followed by specific policies to help achieve each goal

Goal No. 1 Provide a safe, comfortable, resilient, and reliable transportation system that provides adequate and equitable mobility for people, goods, and services.

Policy 1.1 Base transportation investment decisions on clearly stated rational criteria.

Policy 1.2 Implement proven safety countermeasures and crash modification factors to reduce the number and severity of collisions.

Policy 1.3 Identify and work to reduce multimodal transportation network gaps that hinder the safe and efficient movement of people and goods.

Policy 1.4 Prioritize active, multimodal, and demand-management solutions to mobility and congestion problems over high-cost vehicle capacity capital projects.

Policy 1.5 Promote transportation facilities that provide for everybody, including people of all ages, abilities, ethnicities, incomes and neighborhoods.

Policy 1.6 Promote alternatives to single-occupant vehicle travel such as walking, riding transit, carpooling, vanpooling, and bicycling.

Policy 1.7 Encourage residents living in coastal areas with limited access to work with emergency service agencies to develop local evacuation plans for natural or man-made disasters.

Policy 1.8 Coordinate with state and local agencies to implement the “safe systems approach” in the IRTPO Comprehensive Safety Action Plan to advance transportation safety for all users of the transportation system including transit, bike and pedestrian activities.

Policy 1.9 Implement the Island County Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan.

Goal No. 2 Preserve prior investments in the transportation system, where feasible.

Policy 2.1 Prioritize timely repair, maintenance, and reallocation of road space over new construction for vehicle capacity.

Policy 2.2 Emphasize the most cost-effective solutions that meet the needs of the transportation system.

Policy 2.3 Operate in compliance with the Standards of Good Practice established by the County Road Administration Board (CRAB).

Policy 2.4 Follow established maintenance and repair procedures in order to reduce the long-term costs of operating and maintaining the County’s transportation system.

Policy 2.5 Restrict new transportation projects that increase vehicle capacity unless the project proposal shows that sufficient revenues exist to adequately maintain both existing facilities and the proposed expansion.

Goal No. 3 Support safety, mobility, and economic vitality by providing transportation infrastructure designed to be appropriate for the context of adjacent land uses.

Policy 3.1 Implement a concurrency program that supports the development of the multimodal transportation system to adequately support land use development.

Policy 3.2 Provide an Annual Concurrency Report documenting the completeness of the multimodal system and Active Transportation Network to ensure the concurrency program is meeting its objective consistent with policies 6.9 through 6.14;

Policy 3.3 Transportation infrastructure and services within urban areas should be reflective of urban design, supporting urban development; Particular attention should be given to ensuring that roadway design standards in urban areas provide a high level of connectivity and promote pedestrian circulation.

Policy 3.4 Transportation infrastructure and services in rural areas should be consistent with rural design, land use context, and County funding realities.

Policy 3.5 Support safe, compatible, and reliable aviation and air access as part of Island County's multimodal transportation system. Coordinate within the IRTPO to designate responsibility for aviation planning to the appropriate agency.

Policy 3.6 Support safe, reliable, and resilient bridge and critical crossing connections that provide lifeline access to and within Island County for residents, visitors, and national defense.

Goal No. 4 Minimize negative environmental impacts.

Policy 4.1 Prioritize transportation investments that avoid negatively impacting critical areas.

Policy 4.2 Utilize established best management practices for storm water runoff in the planning, design, and construction of transportation infrastructure.

Policy 4.3 Identify potential environmental constraints and impacts as early as possible in the conceptual design phase of new transportation projects for mitigation sequencing requirements to minimize project costs and expedite the delivery of transportation services and facilities.

Policy 4.4 Involve environmental permitting authorities as early as possible in the design and location of new transportation projects to protect wetlands adjacent to roadways.

Policy 4.5 Proactively identify opportunities to replace road culverts to improve fish passage, wildlife habitat, and other aspects of the natural environment.

Goal No. 5 Build strong relationships between Island County and other local and regional agencies to engage in cooperative planning of common transportation improvements.

Policy 5.1 Provide regular public forums for both elected officials and staff to collaborate with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), Washington State Ferries (WSF), Island Transit, Port of Coupeville, Port of South Whidbey, Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, local City and Town jurisdictions and other relevant agencies.

Policy 5.2 Explore opportunities to collaborate and develop cost effective solutions with state, county and local organizations.

Policy 5.3 Coordinate with adjoining jurisdictions and transit service providers, such as Naval Air Station Whidbey Island and Island Transit, to develop and provide better connections between Island County and regional employment centers.

Policy 5.4 Affordable housing, public services and facilities should be accessible by all transportation modes. Housing, public services and facilities serving low income or mobility impaired citizens should be located in close proximity to transit stops and in areas with a well-developed network of sidewalks and paths.

Policy 5.5 Give particular attention to improving pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities along the SR 20 and SR 525 corridor and in areas surrounding ferry terminals to facilitate a greater share of walk-on ferry passengers.

Policy 5.6 Work with WSDOT to ensure that new development in Island County is concurrent adopted MMLoS standards.

Policy 5.7 Work with local and regional municipalities to identify planned active transportation networks and multimodal transportation corridors and plan transportation needs based on land use plans within the rural county and Urban Growth Areas (UGAs).

Policy 5.8 Inform and coordinate early and often with other agencies to:

- a. Identify and plan for projects on or across agency facilities.
- b. Identify and plan for projects to support multimodal use along and across the regional transportation network including state highways consistent with RCW 47.04.035 Complete Streets Principles.
- c. Identify and plan for projects to support multimodal use along and across the regional transportation network including state highways consistent with and the WSDOT Active Transportation Plan to meet Bicycle and Pedestrian Levels of Traffic Stress (LTS) of 2 or better.
- d. Pursue support and funding for recommended projects identified in the IRTPO Safety Action Plan, the countywide Active Transportation Network, the County 6-year TIP, and other plans.
- e. Ensure effectiveness, connectivity, and safety of SR 532, SR 20, and SR 525 throughout Island County.
- f. Review development projects near or adjacent to city, towns and state infrastructure to coordinate local access and address transportation needs for all users.
- g. Minimize private access to state highways to enhance safety and mitigate chances of vehicle collisions.
- h. Identify multimodal transportation improvements or strategies that may be needed to maintain safety, operations, and functional traffic flow, where pm peak hour vehicle level of service cannot be maintained.
- i. Establish that proposed improvements on state facilities are consistent with the WSDOT Design Manual.
- j. Ensure effectiveness, connectivity, and safety of the state marine highway system.

Policy 5.9 Integrate aviation facilities and services into County transportation, and emergency management planning, with particular attention to redundancy and access during disasters or ferry and bridge disruptions.

Policy 5.10 Advocate with state and federal partners for funding and regulatory support to maintain and improve aviation infrastructure that is critical to Island County's economy, and emergency response.

Goal No. 6 Promote safety, physical activity, and public health by expanding options for active transportation modes.

Policy 6.1 Promote coordination between jurisdictions in the planning and implementation of bicycle, transit, pedestrian and other active transportation facilities to establish continuous networks that support healthy communities.

Policy 6.2 Install and maintain paved shoulders = or > 4 feet on County arterial and collector roadways where feasible.

Policy 6.3 New projects will be designed and constructed considering ADA, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities, as well as bus stop amenities, where transit service exists.

Policy 6.4 Require ADA upgrades and connections between modes of transportation at public transit facilities.

Policy 6.5 Promote a multiuse pathway alongside SR 20, SR 525 and SR 532, as well as a connected system of multi-use paths to encourage active transportation, recreation and physical activity.

Policy 6.6 Promote public beaches for human-powered watercraft access and collaborate with other agencies on access and parking.

Policy 6.7 Encourage innovative and cooperative approaches among public agencies and private parties to provide recreation opportunities and public access.

Policy 6.8 Encourage linkage of parks, recreation areas and shoreline public access points with linear systems, such as hiking trails, bicycle routes, and scenic drives.

Policy 6.9 Vehicle LOS standards for Island County arterials are: Roadway LOS D (volume to capacity ratio 0.81 to 0.90) in rural areas and Roadway LOS E (volume to capacity ratio 0.91 to 1.00) in municipal and non-municipal UGAs.

Policy 6.10 Rural and Urban Pedestrian LOS Standards on the countywide Active Transportation Network are listed below:

- a) Municipal UGA: Urban standard sidewalks both sides or shared two-way multiuse pathway on one side.
- b) Non-municipal UGA: Urban standard sidewalk one side or shared two-way multiuse pathway one side.
- c) Rural County: = or > 4-foot-wide shoulder on roadway.

On the Countywide Active Transportation Network, Pedestrian LOS is depicted according to the categories below: (see Table 2-6).

Dark Purple = Rural (County) meets standard

Light Purple = Rural (County) substandard

Dashed Purple = Further Study Needed

Dark Blue = Urban (UGA) meets standard

Light Blue = Urban (UGA) substandard

Policy 6.11 Rural and Urban Bicycle LOS Standards on the are listed below:

- a) Municipal UGA: Urban standard marked bike lanes both sides or shared two-way multiuse pathway one side.
- b) Non-municipal UGA: Urban standard marked bike lanes both sides or shared two-way multiuse pathway on one side.
- c) Rural County: 4-foot-wide shoulder on roadway.

On the Countywide Active Transportation Network, Bicycle LOS is depicted according to the categories below: (see Table 2-6).

Dark Purple = Rural (County) meets standard

Light Purple = Rural (County) substandard **Dashed Purple** = Further Study Needed

Dark Blue = Urban (UGA) meets standard

Light Blue = Urban (UGA) substandard

Policy 6.12 The Transit LOS Standard is based on presence of bus shelters and marked crossings at Island Transit bus stops within the public road right-of-way.

The prioritization and installation of shelters and crosswalks at transit bus stops helps to make transit safe and convenient for residents and therefore provides mutual benefit to both Island County and Island Transit.

Policy 6.13 Document Active Transportation LOS and Transit LOS standards each year in the Island County Annual Report of Transportation Facilities in advance of the Six-Year TIP.

Policy 6.14 Work with WSDOT to plan, fund, and construct Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) Type 1 or 2 (Separated/Protected) facilities on SR 20 and SR 525 in population centers as called for in WSDOT's Active Transportation Plan – 2020 and Beyond.

2 EXISTING CONDITION OF TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES

The inventory of existing transportation facilities describes the foundation for the transportation and land use conditions utilized for analysis, decision-making, and the Goals and Policies (Chapter 1). This chapter contains maps, statistics, and other information that provide a picture of the transportation system in its current condition.

Personal vehicles are the predominant mode of transportation within the County, where the majority of Island County residents work. Snohomish County is the largest work destination outside of Island County, where residents may commute by personal vehicle or ferry route. For ferry routes to/from Mukilteo in Snohomish County, commuters may connect to off-island transit providers or other modes.

Island County is unique due to its composition of two disconnected islands. This arrangement creates an interesting challenge for those who need to travel between Whidbey and Camano Islands within the County. Driving between Coupeville on Whidbey Island and Maple Beach on Camano Island requires either riding the Clinton-Mukilteo Ferry and driving north through western Snohomish County or crossing Deception Pass Bridge and driving east through both Skagit County and the Northwestern corner of Snohomish County. Either way, this requires a drive of at least 90 minutes on the existing road network for a trip between two destinations that are five miles apart geographically.

The first section of this chapter provides an overview of planning standards and classification schemes used to manage the County's transportation system. The sections that follow describe the existing infrastructure in Island County's unincorporated areas by each of the travel modes (vehicles, ferries, transit, non-motorized, and other) included in the County transportation network.

2.1 Planning Context

Long-range transportation plans build on existing transportation facilities available for residents to travel to home, work, and other destinations, and tourists visiting Island County. There are almost 35,000 people that make up the workforce within Island County. Most of these workers are Island County residents. There are also a significant number of Islanders who travel to other nearby counties for work. Over 5,000 people commute to Snohomish County, where many are employed by Boeing at the airplane factory located adjacent to Everett's Paine Field. Skagit and King Counties are also significant employment destinations, with over 2,000 Island County workers commuting to each of those counties. In addition, there are also over 1,500 workers living in Snohomish County that come to jobs located in Island County. Skagit County also adds substantially to Island County's workforce, with almost 1,000 people arriving each workday via the Deception Pass Bridge.

Most travel within Island County occurs on roadways, which provide public space for vehicles, transit, bicycles, and pedestrians. Roadways are classified by their intended function and desired service to provide a hierarchy of roadways. The County recognizes two functional classification systems that are maintained at the County and Federal levels. This section provides an overview of the planning context for the Transportation Element and includes descriptions of functional classification systems for roadways, concurrency management, level-of-service standards (LOS), and State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) requirements.

Island County Functional Classification

The Island County Functional Classification defines the characteristics of individual roadways to accommodate the travel needs of all roadway users. The design of cross-sections for existing and planned roadways is tied to the functional classification as described in Island County Code: Title 11.01. Island County has classified its street system into five primary categories: State Highways, Major Arterials, Secondary Arterials, Collectors, and Local Access streets. The following sections describe the general characteristics of each functional classification designation. A map of the existing County functional classification is provided in Figure 2-1.

State Highway

The State Highway system serves as the primary arterial roadway system within Island County. State Highways connect many of the subareas within the County, including Oak Harbor and Clinton on Whidbey Island and Camano Island to the City of Stanwood. WSDOT classifies certain State Highways as highways of Statewide Significance (as described later in this section). The three state highways in Island County are SR 20, SR 525, and SR 532.

Major Arterial

Major Arterials are county-maintained roadways that prioritize moving traffic efficiently on the arterial roadway system. These roadways connect State Highways and provide mobility in areas between towns and communities. Major arterials may also provide access to large land areas or serve a large traffic generator, providing the function of local access. These roadways typically have the highest traffic speeds and volumes of all county roadways.

Secondary Arterial

Secondary Arterials support the Major Arterial system by providing another tier of mobility and access between the Major Arterial and Collector networks. These roadways also connect two or more communities and may serve as an alternate route to a Major Arterial or State Highway.

While still some of the busiest roadways on the county roadway network, Secondary Arterials typically have lower traffic speeds and/or volumes as compared to Major Arterials.

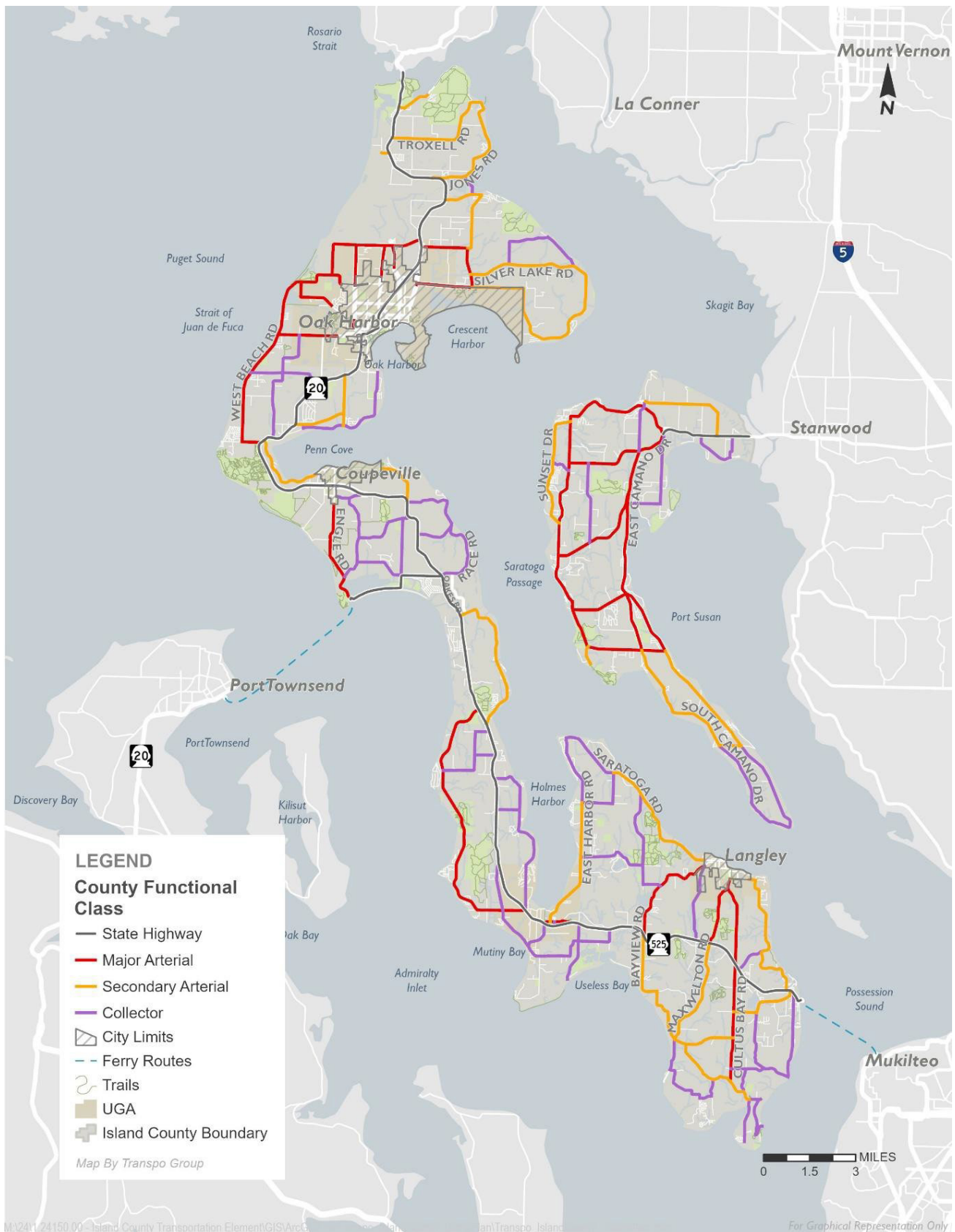
Collector

Collectors provide both access and mobility within Island County between the arterial network and local access streets. The predominant function of these roadways is to collect traffic from neighborhoods and local streets. They may provide for considerable local traffic that originates or is destined to points along the corridor, while providing direct access to adjacent properties.

Local Access

Local access streets provide direct access to adjoining properties, commercial businesses, and similar traffic destinations. Local access roads typically carry low volumes of traffic to low activity land uses. While these roadways typically have low speeds, some of the rural access roadways have higher posted speeds.

Figure 2-1 Island County Functional Classification Map



Federal Functional Classification System

In addition to the Functional Classification system adopted by Island County, there are Federal and State roadway designations that are used to determine funding eligibility under Federal-Aid programs. The Federal Functional Classification system provides a hierarchy of roadways as defined by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and is maintained for Washington State roadways by WSDOT². This classification defines the operation of roadways as a network and arranges the hierarchy of roadways based on the regional function of the system. As a result, the Federal Functional Classification includes several differences to the Island County Functional Classification, which generally focuses on the function of individual roadways as related to adjacent land uses.

Changes to the Federal Functional Classification may be requested through WSDOT with review and approval by the FHWA. Requests are submitted by the local agency for review by the Regional Local Programs Engineer and FHWA. FHWA provides approval, denial, or conditional approval for the request that is supplied back to the local agency. This process is usually completed in 3 months or less. Designations for the National Highway System (NHS) and Highways of Statewide Significance (HSS) are also maintained at the Federal and State levels. A map of the existing Federal functional classification is provided in Figure 2-2.

National Highway System

The National Highway System (NHS) includes the Interstate Highway System as well as other roads important to the nation's economy, defense, and mobility as defined by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). SR 20, from I-5 to the Coupeville Ferry Terminal, and Ault Field Road from SR 20 to Langley Boulevard are designated as NHS facilities. The Strategic Highway Network (STRAHNET) is a subsystem of the NHS for facilities which have strategic defense significance. SR 20, from I-5 to the Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, is a designated STRAHNET facility.

Highways of Statewide Significance

WSDOT designates interstate highways and other principal arterials that are needed to connect major communities in the state as Highways of Statewide Significance (HSS). This designation assists with the allocation of some state and federal funding. These roadways typically serve corridor movements having travel characteristics indicative of substantial statewide and interstate travel. SR 20 and SR 525 are classified as Highways of Statewide Significance.

² WSDOT Functional Classification Map Application. Available at: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/mapsdata/travel/hpms/functionalclass.htm>

Figure 2-2 Federal Functional Classification Map



Vehicle LOS Standards

Level of service (LOS) is a qualitative measure describing the operating conditions for a given transportation facility such as a roadway or intersection. Transportation LOS can be measured by criteria such as level of congestion, travel times or speeds, volume of traffic compared to capacity, frequency of transit service, comfort and convenience, or safety. LOS standards can be based on roadway sections or on intersections, or combinations of facilities or services.

LOS standards are part of the mandatory elements of the County's Comprehensive Plan as required by the Growth Management Act (GMA) (RCW 36.70A.070). The GMA indicates that the transportation element shall include "level of service standards for all locally owned arterials and transit routes to serve as a gauge to judge performance of the system. These standards should be regionally coordinated." The transportation element needs to identify specific actions and requirements for bringing into compliance locally owned transportation facilities or services that operate or will operate below the established LOS standard.

For purposes of the Transportation Element, the County has adopted LOS standards for transportation facilities under its jurisdiction as required under GMA. Island County must also address in coordination with WSDOT LOS standards on state highways and ferry routes serving the County. Evaluating LOS for roadways with transit service is vital to maintaining the on-time performance of local transit service. Roadways with transit routes are evaluated under Island County's LOS standards for the roadway network (Section 2.2). Island Transit does not maintain transit LOS standards that pertain to the frequency and quality of transit within the County.

In addition, the County needs to review its LOS standards within the context of the regional policies established by WSDOT. Furthermore, the County needs to coordinate its LOS standards with cities located within the County, especially as they apply to development within future designated Urban Growth Areas (UGAs), and the agencies included in the Island Regional Transportation Planning Organization (IRTPO).

Transportation Concurrency Management

The County must ensure the transportation system meets the needs of new development. The primary regulatory mechanism to achieve this is referred to as concurrency, which is mandated in the GMA. The requirements in the GMA (RCW 36.70A.070(6)(b)) state that:

"...local jurisdictions must adopt and enforce ordinances which prohibit development approval if the development causes the level of service on a locally owned transportation facility to decline below the standards adopted in the transportation element of the comprehensive plan, unless transportation improvements or strategies to accommodate the impacts of development are made concurrent with the development... concurrent with development shall mean that improvements or strategies are in place at the time of development, or that a financial commitment is in place to complete the improvements or strategies within six years."

The County uses a concurrency management program to ensure transportation facilities are constructed as development occurs. Island County is unique under current state law which requires counties made up of islands to apply concurrency to those facilities designated as Highways of Statewide Significance (HSS). In other counties, the concurrency requirements do not apply to HSS facilities. While this requirement might seem to unfairly penalize Island County, the GMA offers some flexibility by allowing local jurisdictions to define, measure, monitor, and maintain LOS according to the land use and transportation system priorities adopted in their unique local Comprehensive Plan.

Concurrency Service Areas

Creating Concurrency Service Areas (CSAs) allows concurrency issues to be defined by the location of the development proposal within the County. This ensures that concurrency evaluations in one part of the County do not prohibit development where different major transportation facilities are used in another part of the County. The proposed CSAs coincide with the Island County Planning Areas (Camano Island and North, Central, and South Whidbey) as shown in Figure 2-3.

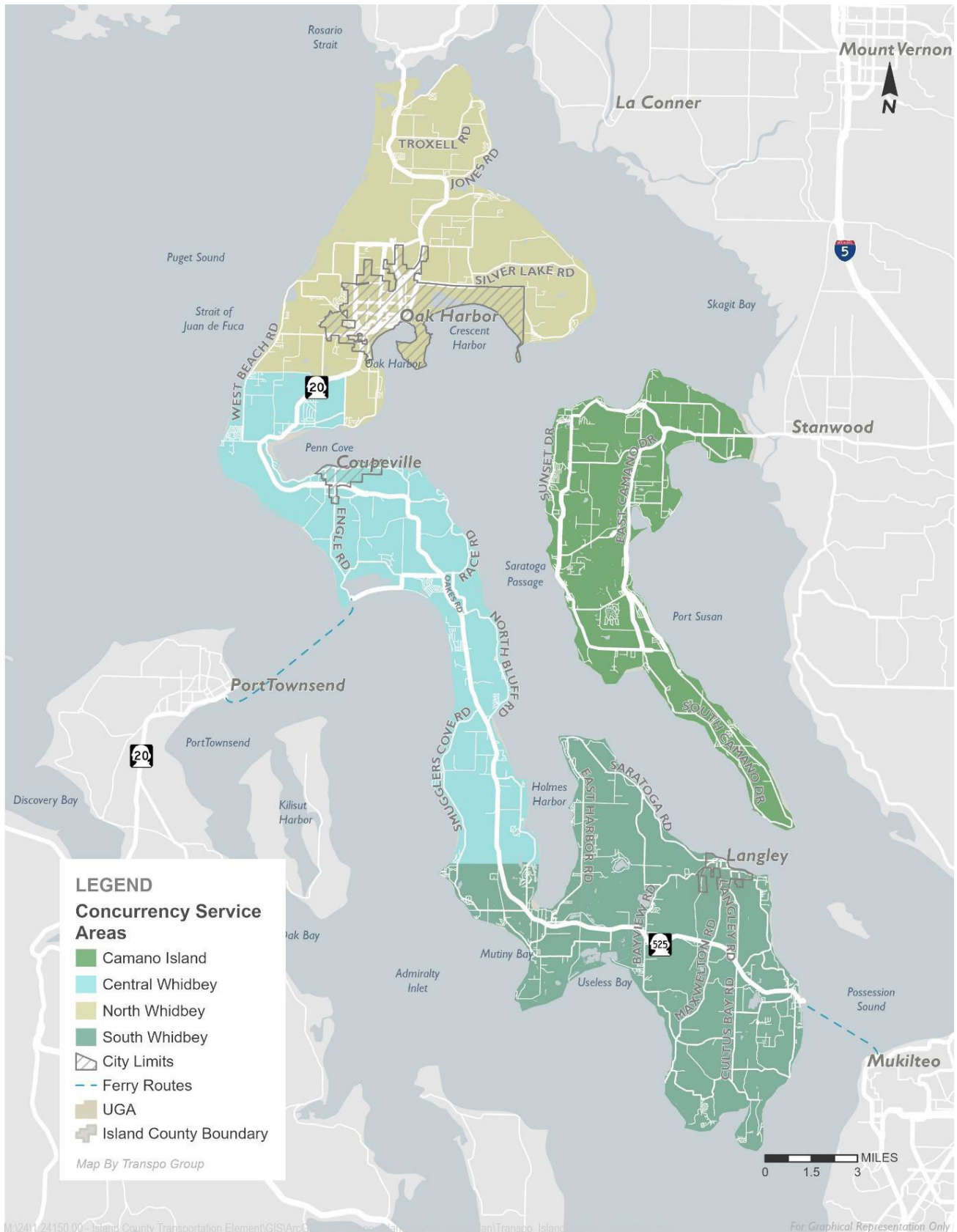
The concurrency service areas are used to apply the LOS standards to the state highways, ferry routes, and County intersections as described in the following section. The details and agreement of LOS standards on state facilities are contained in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the County and WSDOT.

Prior to the 2015 update of its Transportation Element, Island County used an intersection-based LOS standard for managing concurrency. For county-owned facilities located within designated urban areas, the standard was LOS D. For county-owned facilities located in outlying rural areas, the standard was LOS C. In locations where county facilities intersect non-county-owned facilities (such as city streets or state highways) the standard was LOS E for urban areas and D for rural areas.

The County determined that two components were important to defining the adequacy of its transportation system for the purposes of concurrency. The first was the ability to maintain a reasonable travel speed for major corridors serving the County. Additionally, the County wants to ensure that intersections on state highways and arterials operate without extensive delays during peak travel periods. To accommodate these two objectives, the County established a travel time-based LOS standard for designated corridors and a second standard for designated intersections.

In addition to establishing LOS standards for corridor travel speeds and designated intersections, the County periodically reviews intersection operations through updates to the Transportation Element. The most recent results from the 2015 update to the Transportation Element and a comparison to the results from the previous 2000 Transportation Element is contained in the Traffic Operations section of this chapter. This is an important methodology for assessing the overall health of the roadway network as it provides an update on how the transportation system has changed since the previous plan. Intersection safety is also part of State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) requirements as described later in this section.

Figure 2-3 Concurrency Service Areas and Facilities



Concurrency LOS Standards

As part of the Transportation Element update, the County determined that three components of the transportation network are most important to defining the adequacy of its transportation system. The facilities tested for concurrency include:

- State highway corridors serving the County are evaluated based on minimum average travel speeds during peak travel periods that correspond to LOS thresholds in the Highway Capacity Manual (Transportation Research Board, 2010);
- Ferry service to and from Whidbey Island is evaluated based on the level of service standards set by Washington State Ferries (WSF); and
- Intersections of roadways federally classified as arterials or collectors (including roadways with transit routes) with other arterials or collectors are evaluated based on intersection delays during peak travel periods.

Corridor Level of Service Standards

Island County and WSDOT have agreed that weekday PM peak hour travel speeds along state highways are critical to maintaining the adequacy of these routes. Highways within Island County are generally two-lane facilities with varying densities of unsignalized intersections and driveways. These highways serve moderately developed areas and have some segments that pass-through areas with more intense development. These segments are typically differentiated by lower speed limits. These characteristics are generally consistent with the Class III two-lane highway definition in the Highway Capacity Manual (HCM 2010). HCM 2010 defines LOS for these facilities by the percent of free flow speed for traffic, which represents the ability of vehicles to travel at or near the speed limit, on highway segments.

The percent of free-flow speed (PFFS) range that represents LOS D for Class III two-lane highways is between 66.7 and 75 percent. LOS D was selected based on the table of Level of Service Standards for Washington State Highways (WSDOT Design Manual). For each concurrency corridor, a minimum average travel speed based on the PFFS will be applied to concurrency review. The average travel speeds on the corridors are set at 70 percent of the posted speed limit (within the range for LOS D). The standards are applied during the weekday evening commute, typically from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m., where roadways regularly experience the highest traffic volumes and slowest travel speeds within the County. The travel speeds account for the total average speed of a vehicle, including delays at the intersections between the limits of each segment.

For each of the corridor segments, the County has established a minimum average travel speed which will be applied to concurrency review. These corridors measured for LOS consist of several segments along the three state highways within the County. The extents of the corridors end at major intersections, including at or near city limits, or CSA boundaries. The following corridors and extents are contained within one of the four CSAs and have LOS standards set as described in the Island County Transportation Concurrency Management Program (May 2015):

- SR 20
 - Deception Pass Bridge to Oak Harbor City Limits
 - Oak Harbor City Limits to Libbey Road
 - Libbey Road to W Main Street (Coupeville)
 - Main Street (Coupeville) to Race Road/Wanamaker Road
 - Race Road to Coupeville Ferry Terminal

- SR 525
 - Race Road to Mutiny Bay Road (Freeland)
 - Mutiny Bay Road (Freeland) to Bayview Road
 - Bayview Road to Langley Road/Cultus Bay Road
 - Langley Road/Cultus Bay Road to Clinton Ferry Terminal

As part of a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with WSDOT, the status of these corridors will be updated periodically.

Ferry Routes

For the purposes of concurrency, ferry routes are considered extensions of the roadway network and subject to concurrency LOS standards. The details of the LOS standards for the ferry routes are contained in the Ferry Service section of this chapter. Ferry routes serving the County are operated by WSDOT under the Washington State Ferries (WSF). The Port Townsend-Coupeville and Mukilteo-Clinton ferry routes are included in the Central Whidbey CSA and South Whidbey CSA, respectively.

Ferry LOS is reviewed for concurrency in the associated CSAs according to the LOS standards established in the Final Long-Range Plan (WSF, 2009). WSF LOS standards include two levels, where Level 1 LOS standards indicate when additional pricing and operational strategies might be needed, and Level 2 LOS standards indicate when additional service might be needed.

For purposes of implementing the County’s concurrency program, “Level 2/Mitigated” is the LOS standard. This standard requires implementation of transportation mitigation when the LOS for ferry routes exceeds Level 2 standards. While WSF may implement potential mitigation strategies once Level 1 standards are exceeded, the County will require development proposals within CSAs exceeding Level 2 standards to implement mitigation measures as part of the condition of development approval. Decisions on what mitigation measures are appropriate will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Island County Public Works Director.

Intersection Level of Service Standards

The County has established LOS standards for intersections on Arterials, Collectors, and transit routes. The standards apply to both signalized and unsignalized intersections according to the standard practices contained in the latest edition of the Highway Capacity Manual (Transportation Research Board).

Signalized intersection LOS is defined in terms of a weighted average control delay for the entire intersection. Control delay quantifies the increase in travel time that a vehicle experiences due to the traffic signal control as well as provides a surrogate measure for driver discomfort and fuel consumption. Signalized intersection LOS is stated in terms of average control delay per vehicle.

Unsignalized intersections LOS criteria can be further reduced into two intersection types present within Island County: all-way stop control and two-way stop control. All-way stop control intersection LOS is expressed in terms of the weighted average control delay of the overall intersection or by approach. Two-way stop-controlled intersection LOS is defined in terms of the average control delay for each minor-street movement (or shared movement) as well as major-street left-turns. The County establishes LOS standards based on the type of intersection as described below.

- **Traffic Signals, Roundabouts, and All-Way Stop Controlled Intersections** – LOS D or better based on overall average delay per vehicle.
- **Unsignalized Two-Way Stop Controlled Intersections** – LOS E or better for worst traffic movement. On a case-by-case basis, the County may allow the LOS for traffic movements from the minor streets at two-way stop controlled intersections to operate below the adopted standard, if the County determines that no significant safety or operational issues will result.

The lower LOS standard for unsignalized, two-way stop-controlled intersections reflects the desire to minimize delays on the major street and through street traffic, while supporting safe and efficient operations for minor streets. The County typically will apply the intersection LOS standard to the weekday PM peak hour. The County may, however, define additional evaluation periods for intersection review to identify if potential impacts would occur. These could include weekday AM peak hour, weekends, or other time periods depending on the type and location of a proposed development.

State Highway Level of Service Standards

WSDOT sets LOS standards for Washington State Highways of Statewide Significance (HSS) jointly with regional transportation planning organizations (RTPOs) across the state. These LOS standards can also be used for SEPA evaluations and are contained in Appendix 29 of the Development Services Manual³.

WSDOT has established LOS standards for Urban and Rural designations in Island County based on UGA boundaries. For HSS located in Urban areas the standard is LOS E, and for HSS located in Rural areas the standard is LOS D. Within Island County, these standards apply to SR 20 and SR 525. LOS standards for state highways of non-HSS are established at the same thresholds: LOS E for Urban areas and LOS D for Rural areas. SR 532 is a non-HSS route in Island County.

State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA)

Island County will continue to use SEPA to review the impacts of new development on roadways and intersections. The SEPA review would be used to evaluate impacts on:

- Safety, such as horizontal curvature issues, sight distance, non-motorized, and other
- Intersection operations, level of service, and queue impacts
- Roadway congestion
- Transit and Non-motorized transportation

SEPA review is based on the development project having an adverse impact. Assessment of transportation impacts under SEPA depends on the conditions for each transportation facility or service serving a new development. If adverse impacts are identified, the County can condition the development to provide mitigation to offset or reduce its impacts. This mitigation would help improve the transportation system, at least to the extent of mitigating project impacts.

³ Development Services Manual. WSDOT. 2005. Available at: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Publications/Manuals/M3007.htm>

2.2 Roadway Network

The road and highway system provides mobility and access for most travelers and accommodates multiple types of modes. Roadways on Whidbey and Camano Island do not directly connect to one another, but both include major roadways within the transportation system. These roadways comprise the predominant routes of travel within Island County and include a range of purposes, which are analyzed for operations in this transportation plan.

- Camano Island – A series of major and minor county roadways circulate around Camano Island. These roadways connect to SR 532 on the northeast end of the island. SR 532 serves as the primary connection to the mainland across Davis Slough and the Stillaguamish River via the Camano Gateway Bridge, connecting to the City of Stanwood and I-5 in Snohomish County.
- Whidbey Island – SR 20 and SR 525 transect Whidbey Island and serve as the primary north-south facilities for roadway travel. SR 525 provides access to the Clinton Ferry at the south end of the Island. The Clinton Ferry takes passengers, bicyclists, and motor vehicles to the City of Mukilteo in Snohomish County. SR 20 provides access to the Coupeville Ferry at approximately the mid-point of the island. The Coupeville Ferry takes passengers, bicyclists, and motor vehicles to Port Townsend in Jefferson County on the Olympic Peninsula. SR 20 also provides a roadway connection to the mainland via the Deception Pass Bridge. The Deception Pass Bridge is at the north end of Whidbey Island and connects to Skagit County. Other roads feed into these state highways and connect local neighborhoods, cities, towns, and recreational areas at wider sections of the island.

Separate summaries for the traffic volumes and traffic operations at intersections are presented in the following sections.

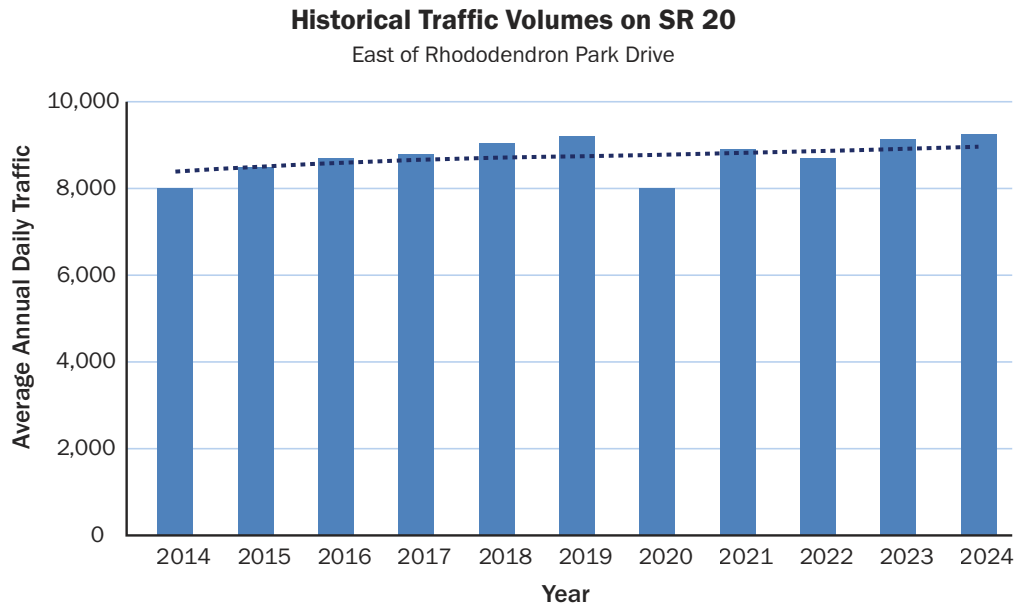
Traffic Volumes

This section describes vehicle traffic volumes on Island County roadways. Traffic counts have been collected at several locations on State Highways and County roadways. Traffic counts conducted by WSDOT are continuously collected at permanent traffic recorders and maintained in a statewide database. Traffic counts on County roads are collected on occasion with tube counters and maintained in a database at the County Road Administration Board. These are typically updated on a three-year rolling basis to maintain a baseline of traffic counts throughout the county. Traffic counts are also collected at select locations by WSDOT on an annual basis to provide traffic volumes based on seasonally adjusted traffic counts.

State Highways

State Highways carry the most vehicle volume in Island County. These roadways have the greatest number of travelers and are maintained by WSDOT. Traffic counts collected on these roadways are summarized into Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) volumes that are seasonally adjusted to account for fluctuations in travel due to summer peaks or winter lows. AADTs are reported in Island County for the sole permanent traffic recorder location, which is on SR 20 east of Rhododendron Park Drive (Station #706). Figure 2-4 shows the AADT for this location on SR 20 from 2014 through 2024.

Figure 2-4 Historical AADT for SR 20



As shown in the graph above, traffic volumes on SR 20 in Island County have grown slightly over the past decades. Traffic volumes on SR 20 at this location are around 9,000 average daily trips for the most recent year available. The linear trend line shows an average of 1.5 percent growth in roadway volumes per year. However, the upward trend in traffic volumes decreased during 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic but began increasing again. 2024 AADT values passed the 2019 pre-pandemic high.

Island County Roadways

An extensive data collection effort is performed by Island County for many Arterial and Collector roadways each spring. Tube counts are collected along several roadways on Whidbey and Camano Islands to collect average daily counts (ADT) and peak hour counts by direction. Traffic volumes at key locations are shown in Figure 2-5 through Figure 2-7. Peak hour traffic counts at major intersections throughout the County were collected periodically to support analysis of intersection traffic operations. The most recent turning movement counts (TMCs) were collected during Fall 2024.

Figure 2-5 Existing (2025) Traffic Volumes (North Whidbey)



Figure 2-6 Existing (2025) Traffic Volumes (South Whidbey)

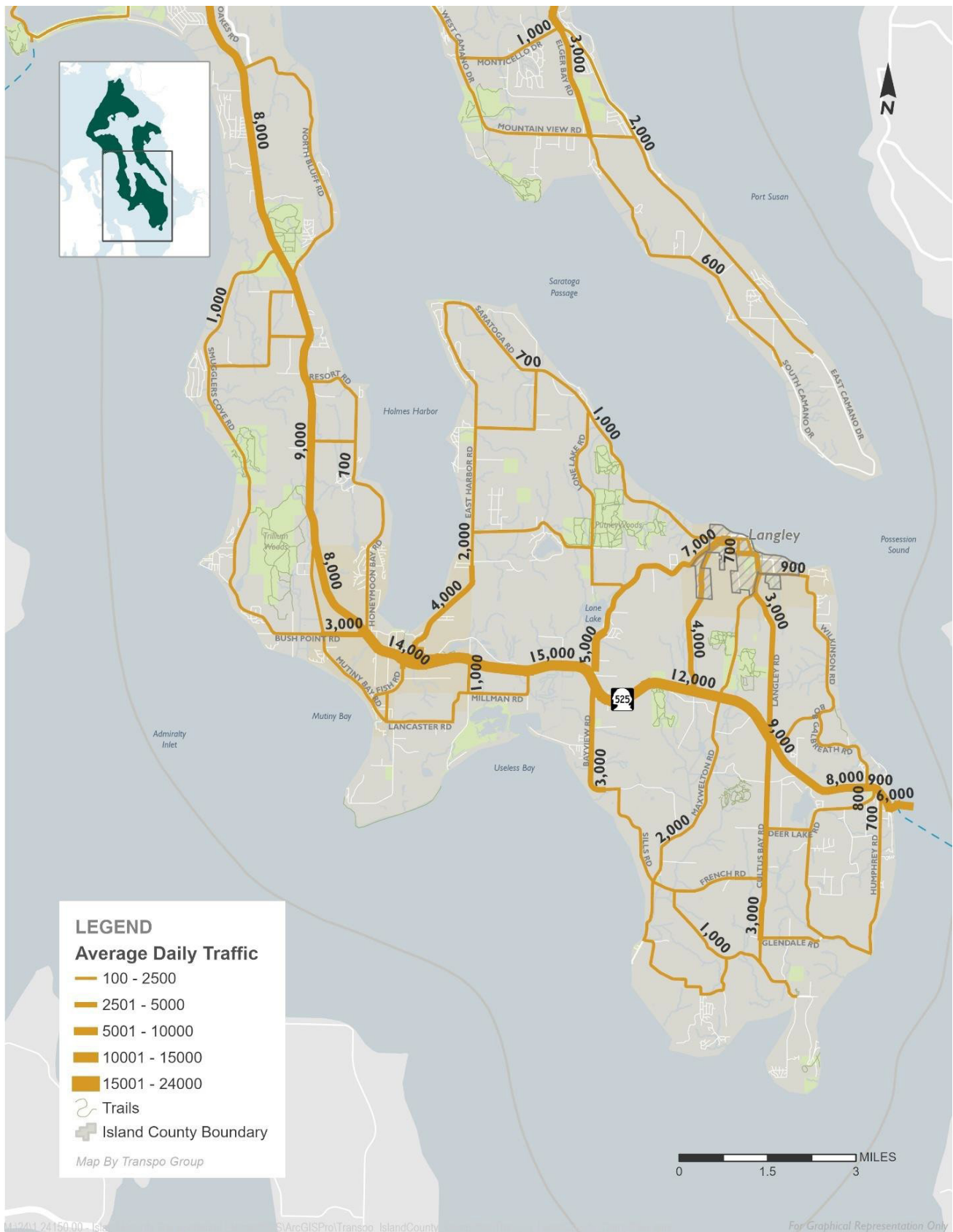


Figure 2-7 Existing (2025) Traffic Volumes (Camano)



Traffic Operations

Existing traffic operations were evaluated for intersections identified by county staff based on their knowledge of locations with potential operational or safety concerns. This is an important methodology for assessing the overall health of the roadway network as it provides an update on how the transportation system has changed since the previous plan. In addition, intersection traffic operations provide a snapshot of the health of the roadway network by providing:

- Delays experienced by drivers at intersections,
- Information on pinch points in the system, and
- A picture of active transportation mode use through counts collected at intersections.

Traffic operations include a technical analysis to evaluate how drivers experience traveling through the roadway system. It is applied to existing and forecast conditions to assist in identifying issues and potential improvement options. Traffic operations are compared to level of service (LOS) standards established by jurisdictions and local agencies.

Existing Operations Results

Intersection traffic operations were evaluated at several intersections in the County based on the standards and practices contained in the *Highway Capacity Manual* (Transportation Research Board, 7th Edition). Intersection levels-of-service were evaluated using a traffic planning and analysis software called Synchro version 12 for the PM peak hour. The evening peak hour was selected due to the higher typical traffic volumes occurring during that time period for a single hour between 4 and 6 p.m. Table 2-1 shows the LOS results at key intersections in the County.

As shown in the table, all of the intersections operate at LOS D or better during the weekday PM peak hour except for the intersection of SR 525 / E Bush Point Rd / SR525 / S Honeymoon Bay Rd. This intersection operates at LOS E during the PM peak hour due to difficulty for left turn vehicles accessing SR 525 during periods of afternoon travel peaks. The 2025 PM peak hour results are also shown Figure 2-8.

Intersection	Jurisdiction	Intersection Control ²	2025 PM Peak Hour		
			LOS ¹	Delay ²	WM ³
SR 20 / Ault Field Road	WSDOT	Signal	C	25	--
Heller Road / Clover Valley Road / Ault Field Rd	Island County	Roundabout	A	7.5	0.57
East Harbor Road / Main Street	Island County	All-Way Stop	A	9.2	
Langley Road / Maxwellton Road	Island County	Two-Way Stop	B	10.5	EBL
Cultus Bay Road / Log Cabin Road / Deer Lake Road	Island County	Two-Way Stop	B	11.1	WB
East Cross Island Drive/ East Camano Drive	Island County	Signal	B	18.6	
McElroy Drive / East Camano Drive	Island County	Signal	A	9.4	
East Camano Drive / South Camano Hill Drive	Island County	Signal	A	1.5	
East Monticello Drive / E Camano Drive / South Elger Bay Road	Island County	Two-Way Stop	C	20.7	EB
SR 525 / Honeymoon Bay Road	WSDOT	Two-Way Stop	E	47.6	WBL
South Elger Bay Road / East Mountain View Road	Island County	Two-Way Stop	A	9.9	EB
EB North Torpedo Road / West Crescent Harbor Road	Island County	Two-Way Stop	C	19	SB

¹ Level-of-service based on Highway Capacity Manual 7th Edition methodology.

² Average delay in seconds per vehicle.

³ Worst movement reported for unsignalized intersections.

Acronyms for Table 2.1

Delay = Average seconds of delay per vehicle during PM Peak Hour LOS = Level of Service

SR = State Route

PM Peak Hour = The heaviest 60 minutes of traffic volume between 4:00-6:00pm WM = Worst Movement

WSDOT = Washington State Department of Transportation

Figure 2-8 Existing Intersection LOS



Traffic Safety

Collision records for the most recent complete five-year period were reviewed for all collisions reported in Island County. Historical safety data was collected from WSDOT for the period of January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2023. Table 2-2 summarizes the collision history records by year for State Highways and County Roads.

Table 2-2 Island County Collision History (January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2023)

Location	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	5-Year Total
State Highway Collisions						
Fatality ¹	4	3	2	3	2	14
Injury ²	101	80	97	74	88	440
PDO ³	249	194	251	224	237	1,155
Subtotal	354	277	350	301	327	1,609
County Road Collisions						
Fatality	4	3	3	2	2	14
Injury	88	75	71	67	75	376
PDO	153	153	165	136	156	763
Subtotal	245	231	239	205	233	1,153
State Highway and County Road Intersections Collisions						
Fatality	8	6	5	5	4	28
Injury	189	155	168	141	163	816
PDO	402	347	416	360	393	1,918
Total	599	508	589	506	560	2,762

Source: WSDOT Collision Reports

¹ Collisions with at least one fatality

² Collisions with at least one injury

³ Collisions with property damage only (PDO)

As shown in the table, there were nearly 2,800 reported collisions in Island County over the five-year study period. This is an average of 560 collisions reported per year, with slightly more occurring on State Routes (average of 300 per year) than County Roads (average of 260 per year). The year with the highest number of collisions is 2009, where 610 collisions were reported on State Highways and County Roads. Many of the collisions that occurred on County and State roadways are single vehicles running off the road or striking fixed objects, such as guardrails. While some of these collisions occurred along curves on roadway, there are few discernible patterns to these types of roadway collisions.

Collision records for State Routes were further analyzed to calculate historical collision rates for comparison to statewide averages. Collision rates are calculated based on the number of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) derived from the roadway length and AADT volumes. This provides a common denominator for comparing the number of collisions on roadways with different traffic volumes and lengths.

Table 2-3 summarizes collision rates for State Highways in Island County over the 5-year study period.

Table 2-3 Exhibit State Route Collision Rates (January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2023)

Roadway	Length (mi.)	5-Year Total Crashes	Crashes/Year	AADT ¹	MVM ²	Collision Rate ³
State Highways						
SR 20	29	1,130	226	22,000	211.7	5.34
SR 525	22	379	76	10,000	96.4	3.93
SR 532	3	100	20	17,000	18.6	5.37
Total	54	1,609	322	49,000	327	14.64

Source: WSDOT Collision Reports

¹ AADT – Average Annual Daily Traffic for 2012 (from WSDOT Traffic Report)

² MVM – Million Vehicle Miles

³ Average number of crashes per million vehicle miles traveled

As shown in Table 2-3, collision rates per million vehicle miles of travel on the Principal Arterials within Island County range between 3.93 for SR 525 and 5.37 for SR 532. The severity of collisions on State Highways within Island County was summarized to determine the number of fatality, injury, and property damage collisions that were reported on the roadways. Table 2-4 shows the severity of collisions on state routes recorded during the most recent 5-year period of crash data obtained from WSDOT.

Table 2-4 State Route Collision Severity Summary (January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2023)

Roadway	Total Crashes	Number of Collisions			Number of Occupants		
		Fatality ¹	Injury ²	PDO ³	Fatalities ⁴	Injuries ⁵	Vehicles ⁶
State Highways							
SR 20	1,130	7	307	816	7	442	2,035
SR 525	379	7	102	270	8	151	649
SR 532	100	0	31	69	0	53	188
Total	1,609	14	440	1,155	15	646	2,872

Source: WSDOT Collision Reports

¹ Number of collisions with at least one fatality

² Number of collisions with at least one injury

³ Number of collisions with property damage only (PDO)

⁴ Total number of fatalities

⁵ Total number of injuries

⁶ Total number of vehicles involved

As shown in the table, there were 15 fatalities on State Highways in Island County over the 5-year study period due to 14 separate collisions. Over the same period, there was an average of 1.46 injuries for each collision that resulted in an injury. Similarly, an average of more than 2 vehicles was involved in each property damage only reported collision, showing that many collisions reported during the study period involved multiple vehicles. Figure 2-9 through Figure 2-11 show the collision locations and severity during the 5-year period.

Figure 2-9 Island County Crash History 2019 – 2023 (North Whidbey)

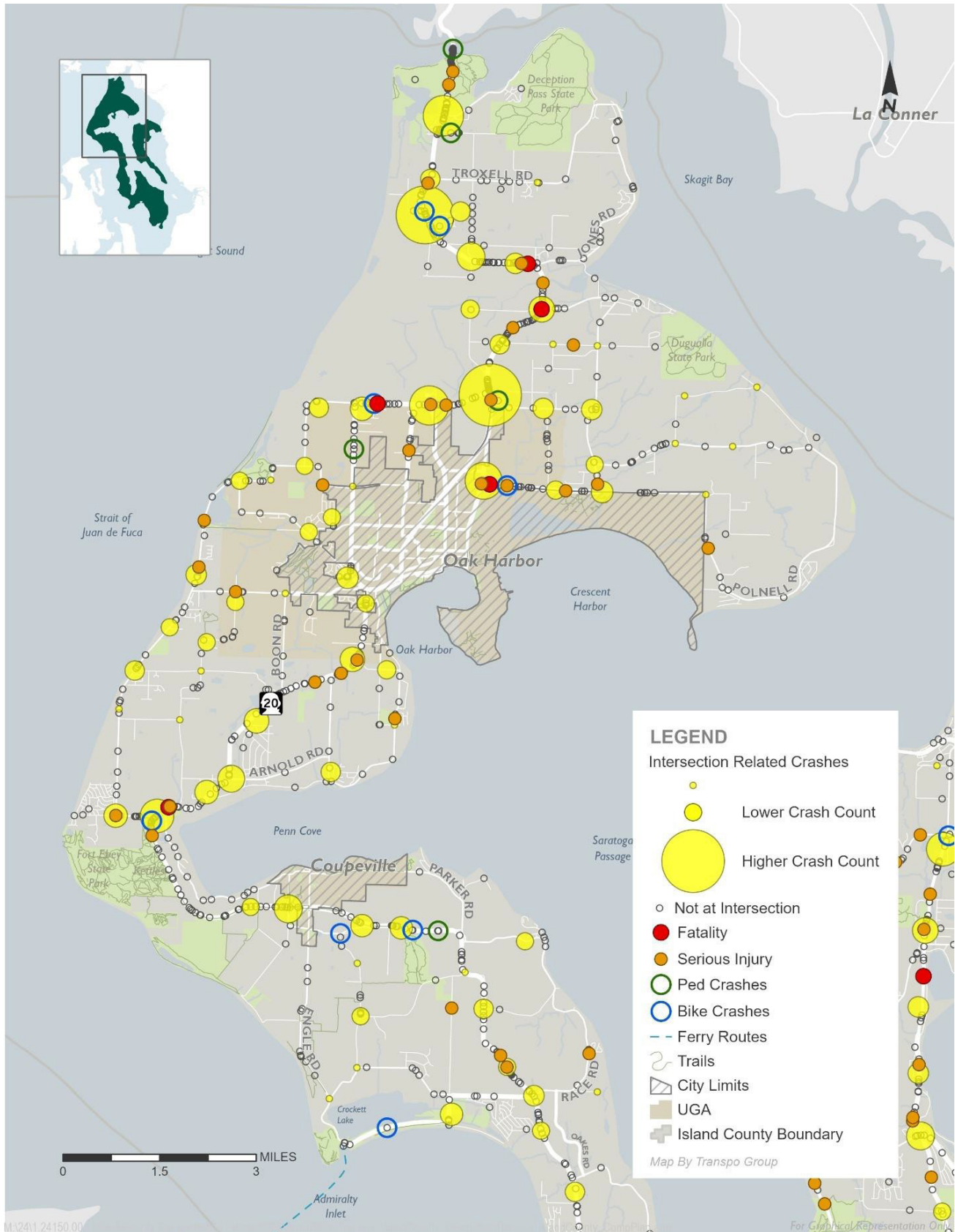


Figure 2-10 Island County Crash History 2019 – 2023 (South Whidbey)

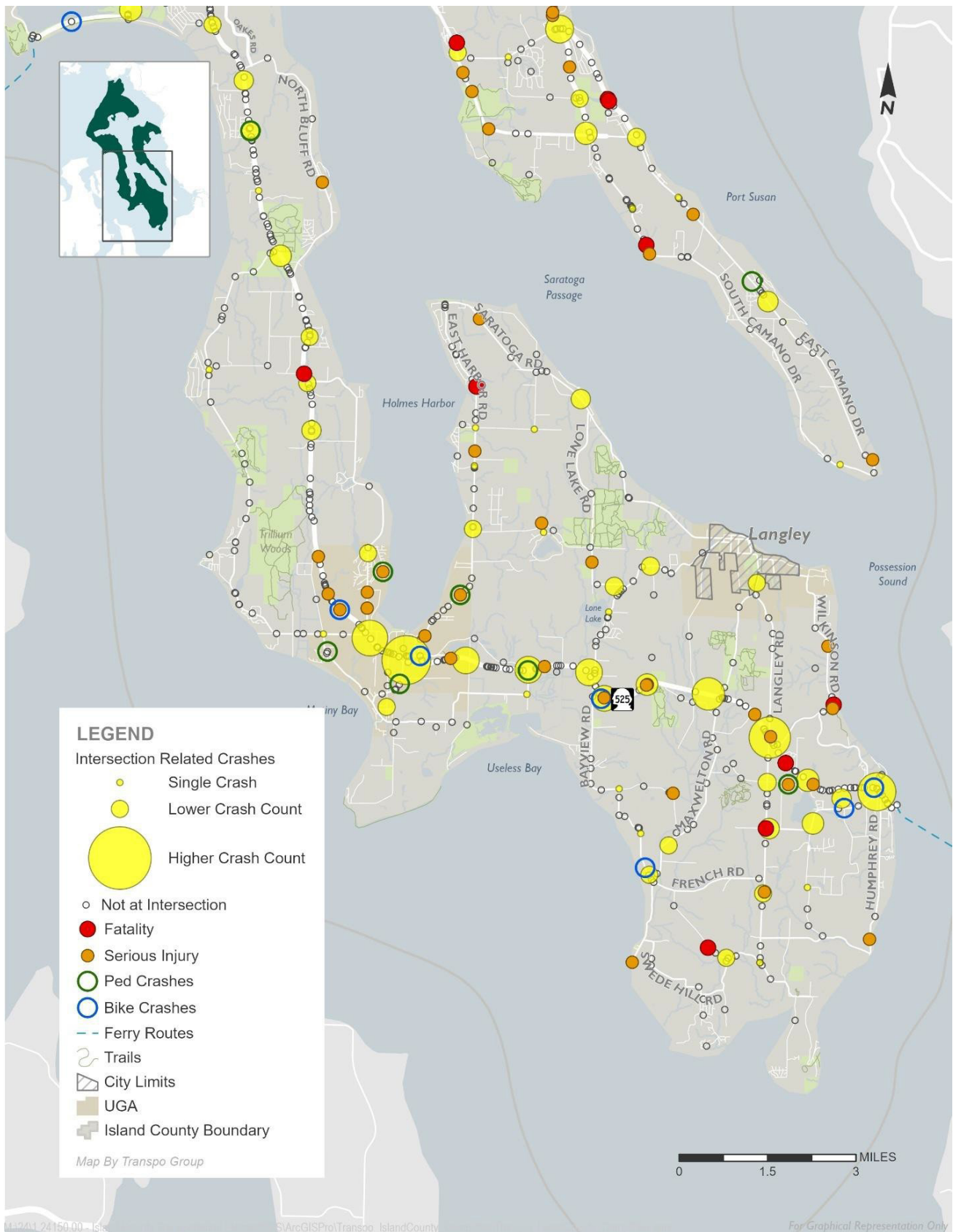
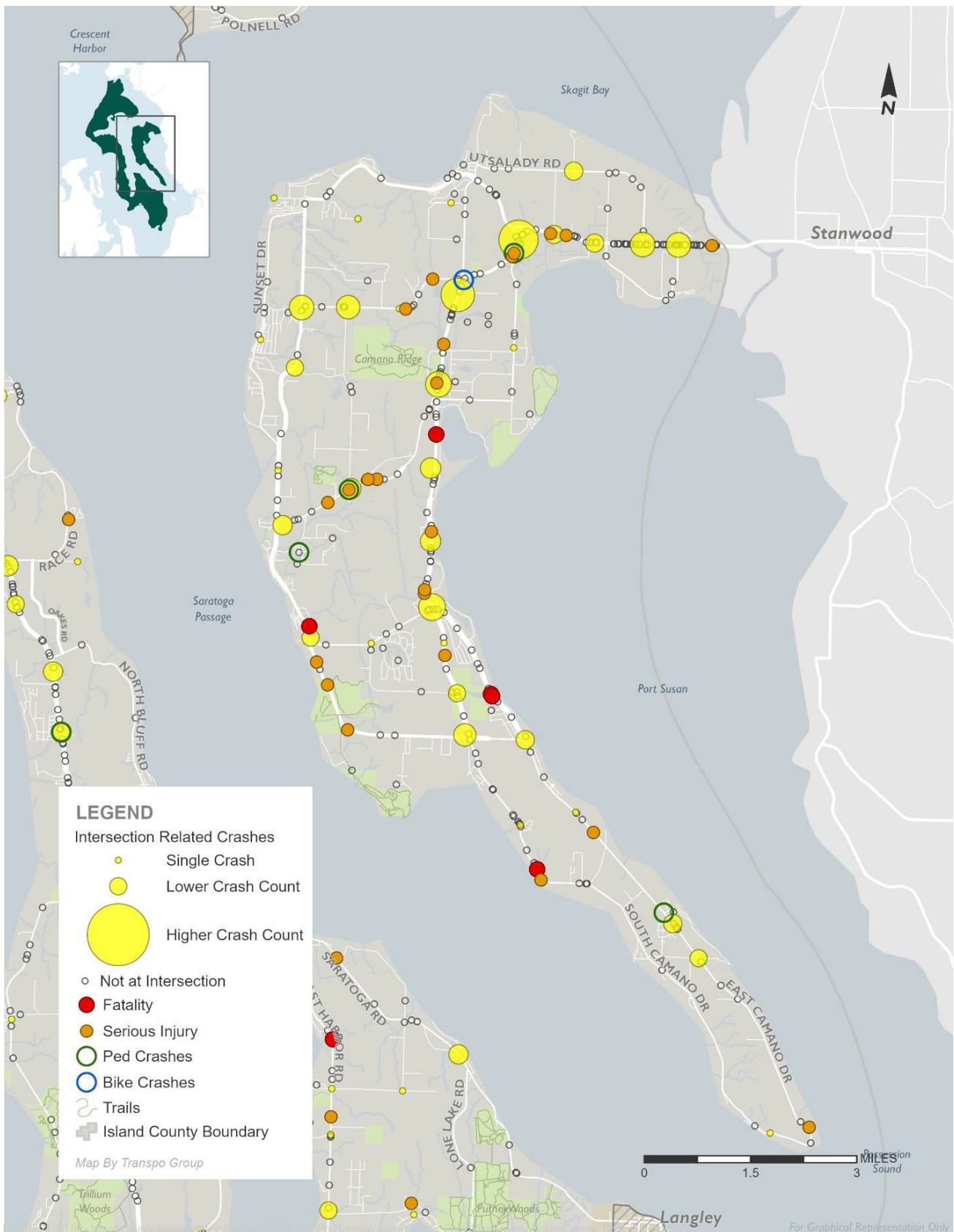


Figure 2-11 Island County Crash History 2019 – 2023 (Camano)



Freight Routes

The [Washington State Freight and Goods Transportation System \(FGTS\)](#)⁴ classifies highways, county roads, and city streets according to the average annual gross truck tonnage they carry. Truck tonnage values are derived from actual or estimated truck traffic count data that is converted into average weights by truck type⁴. The FGTS uses five truck classifications, T-1 through T-5, depending on the annual gross tonnage the roadway carries.

- T-1: more than 10 million tons per year
- T-2: 4 million to 10 million tons per year
- T-3: 300,000 to 4 million tons per year
- T-4: 100,000 to 300,000 tons per year
- T-5: at least 20,000 tons in 60 days and less than 100,000 tons per year

Routes with the highest annual gross tonnage, T-1 and T-2 routes, are also identified as Strategic Freight Corridors.

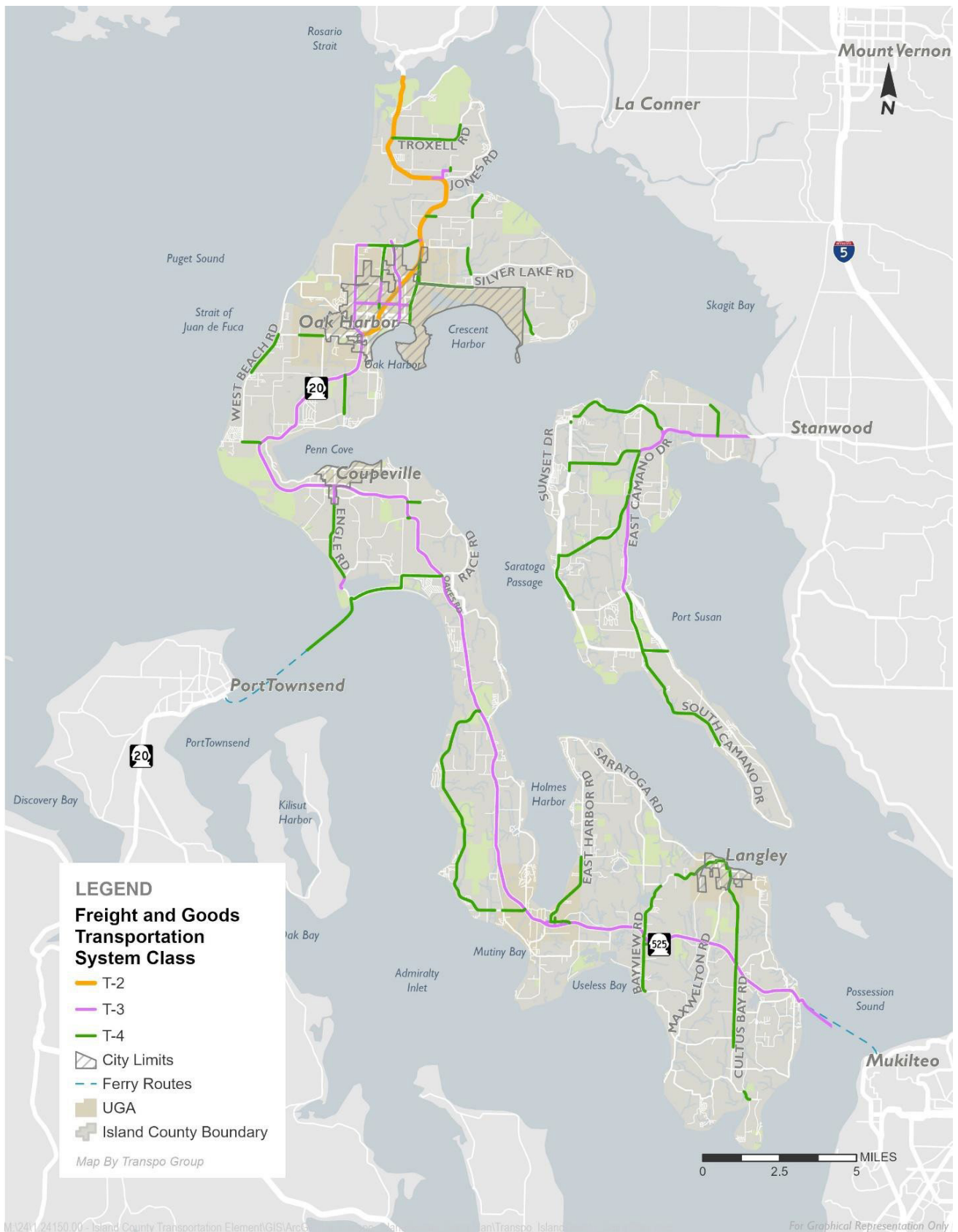
Figure 2-12 shows the FGTS classifications in Island County. The highest classification road in Island County is for SR 20 from Deception Pass Bridge through the City of Oak Harbor which is classified as a T-2 route. The remaining segments of SR 20, SR 525, and SR 532 are T-3 routes, along with short spurs to ferry terminals and towns. Several other important freight routes are county roads on Whidbey and Camano Islands.

Freight Movements

Most of the truck traffic originating from or destined to Island County comes from the City of Oak Harbor, the largest urban area on Whidbey Island and home to Naval Outlying Landing Field. The predominant routes for all truck trips include SR 20, SR 525 and SR 532 for all or part of their trip within Island County.

⁴ [WSDOT Freight and Goods Transportation System \(FGTS\) \(December 2023\)](#)

Figure 2-12 Island County Truck Routes



2.3 Bridges and Critical Crossings

Camano Gateway Bridge carries SR 532 across the West Pass of the Stillaguamish River and is the primary arterial link between Stanwood and Camano Island, functioning as one of two bridging structures on the only roadway access to Camano Island for residents, visitors, and freight. The seismically modern Camano Gateway structure opened to traffic in August 2010, wide shoulders for bicyclists and pedestrians as well as improved highwind and earthquake performance. Immediately to the west, the Davis Slough Bridge carries SR 532 across the estuarine channel that marks the Island–Snohomish County line and, together with the Camano Gateway crossing, forms a single functional corridor whose disruption would sever all highway access to Camano. The original Davis Slough span, constructed in the early 1950s, was replaced in a major WSDOT project between 2014 and 2016; the new bridge opened to traffic in 2016 with a higher deck, modern seismic design, four-foot median separation, and widened shoulders to reduce closures from flooding and improve safety for disabled vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists. Taken together, the Camano Gateway and Davis Slough bridges provide the only (noferry) highway connection between Camano Island and the mainland, serve as a critical lifeline for people, freight, and small packages, and are foundational to regional tourism. Work is underway to secure Highway of Statewide Significance designation for this segment of SR 532.

2.4 Active Transportation

This Transportation Element establishes a long-term countywide Active Transportation Network of existing and planned designated walking and bicycle facilities. The portion of this network that can realistically be constructed over the 20-year planning period will depend on the amount of funding available for improvements to County roads, as well as WSDOT funding for improvements to State Routes.

Establishing an Active Transportation Network can be very challenging for an unincorporated rural geography. The land use context and reality of living in a rural environment demands a different societal expectation for what type of walking and bicycle facilities can be provided. The first step is to take an inventory of regional walking, biking, and multiuse facilities that currently exist. The next step is to examine the physical space and constraints of the existing countywide roadway system to determine if there are opportunities to enhance what already exists, such as roadway shoulders. Some roads currently have paved shoulders, which may not be ideal for comfort and safety, but can serve as places to walk and bike outside of the vehicle travel lane.

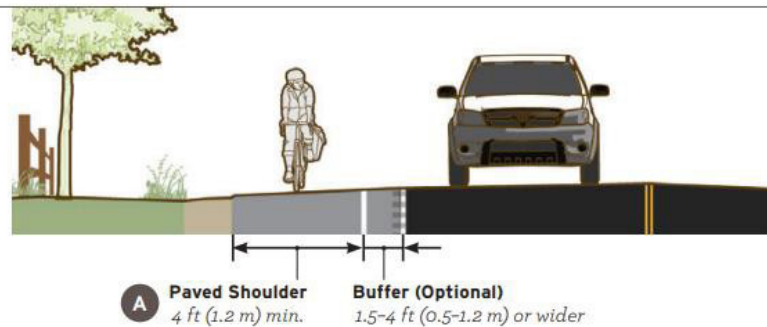
The Active Transportation Network consists of facilities for residents and visitors to participate in active transportation and recreation activities throughout Island County. A combination of on-street facilities and off-street pathways and trails provide the core network for people walking, biking, and rolling to popular destinations. The comprehensive Active Transportation Network complements the [2018 Island County Non-Motorized Trails Plan](#) and will provide local connectivity to work, shopping, education, entertainment, and recreation and regional connectivity between communities, to ferry access points, parks and natural areas, points of interest, and other destinations. The existing non-motorized facilities documented in this section of the plan are based on an inventory conducted in 2025.

In a rural environment, a 4-foot paved shoulder is considered the minimum standard for a designated bicycle facility (Source: [FHWA Small Town and Rural Design Guide, 2017](#); Paved Shoulder illustration below). There are currently several County roads and State Routes that have shoulders equal or greater than four (4) feet in width.

Figure 12. Minimum Active Transportation LOS Standard

Paved Shoulder

Shoulders can improve bicyclist comfort and safety when traveling in higher speed and/or volume situations but only when adequate width is provided. If used, locate rumble strips on the edge line or within a buffer area that will not reduce usable space for bicyclists.



Active Transportation Facilities

Active Transportation facilities vary across Island County to include a range of types that are suited for pedestrians, cyclists, and other types of active users.

Sidewalks

Sidewalks are the primary pedestrian facility within towns and developed areas. Many of the downtown areas including Freeland, Oak Harbor, Coupeville, and Langley provide sidewalks. Along with off-street trails, sidewalks are the primary facility type for pedestrians. Cyclists may also use sidewalks within many of these jurisdictions provided they yield right-of-way to pedestrians. Because sidewalks are typically focused on serving local travel within Island County, they are not shown on any of the non-motorized system maps.

On-Street Facilities

On-street facilities include the bicycle lanes, striped shoulders, and shared roadways that comprise the non-motorized facilities on State Highways and County Roads. These facilities are primarily used for commuter and utility travel between and within the urbanized areas of Island County. Recreational and tourist activities in the county also use these routes. The on-street facilities are shown in Figure 2-13.

Bicycle Lanes

Dedicated bicycle lanes are a minimum of five (5) feet of physical roadway space for bicyclists that are typically in both directions on the edge of the traveled way. They are marked with a wide (4" to 8") white stripe and parking is prohibited. Main Street and Harbor Avenue in Freeland are currently the only county roads that have sections with dedicated / striped bike lanes.

Paved Shoulder

Paved shoulders are on the edge of the traveled way for vehicles. Striped shoulders are considered non-motorized facilities where there is a reasonable distance available for pedestrians and cyclists to travel with minor impact to motor vehicles. For the purposes of this plan, this facility type only includes roadways with striped shoulders greater than four (4) feet wide. Striped shoulders with more than 4 feet of usable width typically provide enough comfortable space for non-motorized users, while narrower striped shoulders often result in non-motorized users being forced into the other travel lanes.

Figure 2-13 Active Transportation Facilities



Shared Roadway

Shared roadways include roadways with striped shoulders less than 4 feet wide, roadways without striped shoulders, and roadways with curbs. On shared roadways, non-motorized users share the travel lane with motor vehicles.

Off-Street Facilities

Off-street facilities include the trail network and recreational beach walks comprised of the low-tide trails in Island County. These types of facilities are generally used for recreational purposes but may also serve commuter and utility travel between urban areas in Island County. The off-street facilities are shown in Figure 2-13.

Trails

The Island County Non-Motorized Plan designates both high-standard, medium standard, and Wildland Trails. For the purposes of the county-wide transportation element, standard trails are separated from the roadways and vary in width from approximately 5 feet to 12 feet wide. ADA access is provided on many trails, but not all.

Low-Tide Trails

Low-tide trails, or beach walks, are regionally significant stretches of firm sand or gravel that allow for walking during low to moderate tides. These do not follow a constructed pathway but are shown as trails on the non-motorized maps. Only walkable beaches that are owned by the public, are of significant length, and have reasonable access are included in the inventory.

Active Transportation Safety Data

Collision records were reviewed for pedestrian and bicycle crashes on State Highways and Island County roadways. Collision records during the most recent 5-year period of crash data obtained from WSDOT were analyzed for collisions that involved non-motorized users. Table 2-5 shows the total and severity of these collisions within Island County.

Table 2-5 Non-Motorized Collision Summary (January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2023)

Roadway User	Total Crashes	Fatality Collisions ¹	Injury Collisions ²	PDO Collisions ³	Number of Fatalities ⁴	Number of Injuries ⁵	Number of Vehicles ⁶
State Highway Collisions							
Pedestrian	21	3	15	3	3	20	26
Cyclist	11	0	11	0	0	11	11
Subtotal	32	3	26	3	3	31	37
County Roadway Collisions							
Pedestrian	12	0	11	1	0	11	12
Cyclist	11	0	11	0	0	11	11
Subtotal	23	0	22	1	0	22	23
State Highway and County Roads Intersection Collisions							
Pedestrian	33	3	26	4	3	31	38
Cyclist	22	0	22	0	0	22	22
Total	55	3	48	4	3	53	60

Source: WSDOT Collision Reports

¹ Number of collisions with at least one fatality

⁴ Total number of injuries

² Number of collisions with at least one injury

⁵ Total number of fatalities

³ Number of collisions with property damage only (PDO)

⁶ Total number of vehicles involved

As shown in the table, there were 55 total crashes involving non-motorized roadway users on State Highways and Island County roadways. Over the 5-year study period, three fatalities and 53 injuries (from 48 injury collisions) were recorded.

Active Transportation LOS Standards

The 2025 Transportation Element supplements the 2018 NMTP and the Parks and Trails Element of the Comprehensive Plan to meet current policy direction from the GMA and WSDOT by establishing an active transportation network, performance measures, and MMLOS standards.

For active (aka non-motorized) transportation, performance and prioritization measures focus on safety and comfort while LOS standards focus on network connectivity and completeness rather than design capacity or user counts. People walking, biking, and rolling in wheelchairs and mobility devices are the most vulnerable users of the transportation system because they:






- Do not have a vehicle structure to protect them
- Are smaller and lighter than larger and heavier vehicles
- Travel at slower speeds (10-15 mph) than vehicles
- Are exposed to vehicle passing and turning conflicts
- Are at higher risk of injury in collisions with vehicles

Active Transportation LOS standards were developed for this plan in alignment with the rural character of much of the county's road network. These rural roadways often have low vehicle volumes which can make them attractive alternatives for active users seeking to avoid the discomfort associated with higher volumes on major routes. However, rural roads often lack shoulders and may see higher traffic speeds due to a variety of factors. A person's choice to walk, bike, or roll is primarily influenced by the availability of well-connected routes and user perception of safety and risk of conflict. For these reasons, it is important that roadways in the active network have adequate facilities to increase the safety and comfort of all users.

The Active Transportation LOS standards are presented in Table 2-6. The LOS designations are shown in blues and purples that correspond to the differing standards in rural vs. urban areas. In unincorporated areas of the county, the standard is defined primarily by the presence or absence of shoulders along designated routes. Shoulders greater than or equal to 4ft wide are the standard which is considered the minimum for a designated bicycle facility in a rural context. (Source: [FHWA Small Town and Rural Design Guide, 2017](#)) Incorporated vs. unincorporated areas of UGA within the county have differing LOS standards per Policies 6.10 and 6.11 in the goals and policies section of this document. The Urban vs. Rural designation was made using the current UGA and City boundaries for Island County.

The darker blue or purple LOS indicates a roadway or route that provides adequate shoulder width for its location and where the active network is considered complete. The lighter blue and purple LOS indicate facilities where shoulders lack sufficient width or may not be present at all. A green LOS indicates multiuse pathways which are separated from the roadway and are low stress facilities appropriate for all ages and abilities. The network of roads where these standards are applied and an existing conditions assessment is shown in section 4.2 of this plan. Specific deficiencies identified when comparing these standards to existing conditions form the basis of projects identified in section 4.6 of this plan.

Table 2-6. Active Transportation Network LOS Standards

LOS	Rating	Bicycle Standard	Pedestrian Standard
	Rural Meets Standard	Shoulders with width \geq 4ft	Shoulders with width \geq 4ft
	Urban Meets Standard	Marked Bike Lanes in both directions/Multi Use Path	Municipal UGA: Sidewalk on Both Sides of Street Non-municipal UGA: Sidewalk on One Side of Street
	Rural Substandard	Shoulders with width $<$ 4ft	Shoulders with width $<$ 4ft
	Urban Substandard	No Bike Lanes	Municipal UGA: Missing sidewalks on one or both sides Non-municipal UGA: No sidewalks
	Meets Standard – All Locations	Multi Use Path	Multi Use Path

2.5 Transit

Island Transit service is a fundamental part of the transportation network that operates on state highways and county arterials, as well as county collectors on both Whidbey and Camano Islands. Within Island County, Island Transit offers fare-free service. Over the past several years, transit ridership in Island County has been increasing on this fare-free system while service has remained relatively constant.

The transit services available in Snohomish and Skagit Counties are important to residents of Island County, particularly weekday commuters who work on the mainland. The primary locations where Islanders can access transit services are Mukilteo, Stanwood, and March's Point Park and Ride in Anacortes. Weekend transit service is minimal, with local service offered on some routes on Saturdays and Sundays.

Mukilteo offers the most transit options. There are currently three different transit providers with stops within walking distance of the ferry terminal.

Sound Transit's Sounder commuter train offers four round trips Monday through Friday into Seattle's King Street Station on the North Line.

Community Transit provides connection to and from downtown Seattle on weekdays, via the Lynnwood Transit Center. The Lynnwood Transit Center is well connected to Sound Transit's frequent express bus service, as well as a significant number of local routes that extend to major destinations throughout Snohomish County.

Community Transit also offers reliable service from Stanwood that is useful for Camano Island residents, including service to the Lynnwood Transit Center throughout the day, six days per week.

Island Transit provides regular service between Terry's Corner Park & Ride and Community Transit's services in Stanwood 7 days a week. They also offer weekday express bus service between Terry's Corner and the Everett Train Station. This makes it easy for Camano residents to leave their cars on the island when connecting to transit.

In addition to bus service, Island Transit operates vanpools that Island County residents use to commute. Major off-island destinations include the Microsoft campus in Redmond, various other Eastside locations, and Downtown Seattle. Vanpoolers travelling aboard ferries enjoy registered high-occupancy vehicle status, making them exempt from having to wait in line at the terminals, provided they have already paid the ferry fare and arrive at least 10 minutes prior to the scheduled sailing time.

Fixed Route Service

Transit service is funded through a tax-based transit district and operated by Island Transit. There are currently 17 fixed service bus routes on Whidbey and Camano Islands. These routes serve communities across the county and are summarized in Table 2-6.

Table 2-6 Existing Fixed Route Service Summary

Route	Description	Type of Service	Midday Service Headways (min.)	Peak Service Headways (min.)
Whidbey Island				
1	North-south spine route connecting Oak Harbor, Coupeville, Greenbank, Freeland, Bayview and Clinton Ferry Terminal	Weekday, Express, Saturday & Sunday	60	60 ¹
2	West Oak Harbor Loop via Heller and Oak Harbor Roads	Weekday, Saturday & Sunday	60	60
On Demand Zone 3	East Oak Harbor Loop via Taylor Road	Weekday	120	120
411W	Tri-County Connector Route between Oak Harbor and Skagit Transit Center via Deception Pass Bridge and SR20 and SR536	Weekday, Saturday	60	60
6	Keystone-Coupeville Route with connection to Oak Harbor via West Beach Road	Weekday	90	90
On Demand Zone 6	Coupeville-Admirals Cove with connection to Coupeville ferry landing	Weekday	120	120
9	West Oak Harbor	Weekday	60	60
10	Central Oak Harbor	Weekday	30	30
58	Scatchet Head to Clinton Ferry Terminal	Weekday	On demand	30
60	Route connecting Clinton, Freeland and Langley	Weekday, Saturday	60	60
Clinton Commuter	Clinton Ferry to Clinton P&R	Weekday	30	30
On Demand NASWI	Shuttle connecting Victory Terrace and Crescent Harbor to NASWI base	Weekday	120	120
Camano Island				
1	Route serving the west region of Camano Island	Weekday	60	60
2	Route serving the east region of Camano Island	Weekday	60	60

Route	Description	Type of Service	Midday Service Headways (min.)	Peak Service Headways (min.)
3	Route serving Stanwood	Weekday	60	60
411C	Tri-County Connector Route between Terry's Corner and Skagit Transit Center via Stanwood	Weekday, Saturday & Sunday	120	120
412	Route between Terry's Corner and Everett Station via Stanwood P&R	Weekday	-	60

Note: ¹⁾ Route 1: 15-minute headway at weekday noon commute hour. Source: Island Transit.

As shown in the table, there are twelve routes operating on Whidbey Island and five serving Camano Island. Island Transit does have more frequent service on some routes during peak hours, particularly those serving commuter travel. Route 1 on Whidbey Island has the shortest headways during the noon hour, with buses arriving approximately every 15 minutes. Most routes, however, operate with headways of 30 or 60 minutes throughout the day. Figure 2-14 through Figure 2-16 shows the transit routes currently operating in Island County.

Figure 2-14 Island County Transit Service (North Whidbey)

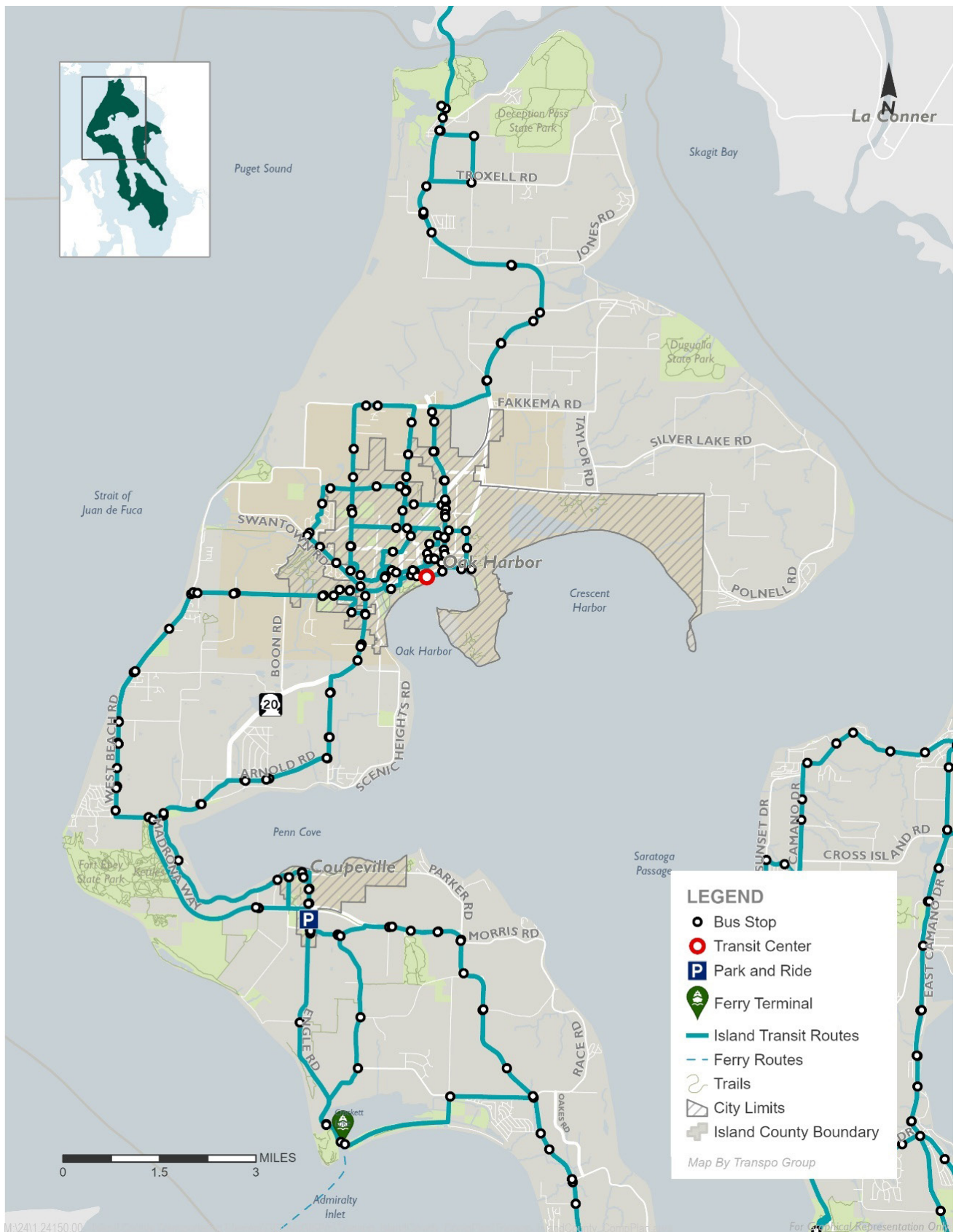


Figure 2-15 Island County Transit Service (South Whidbey)

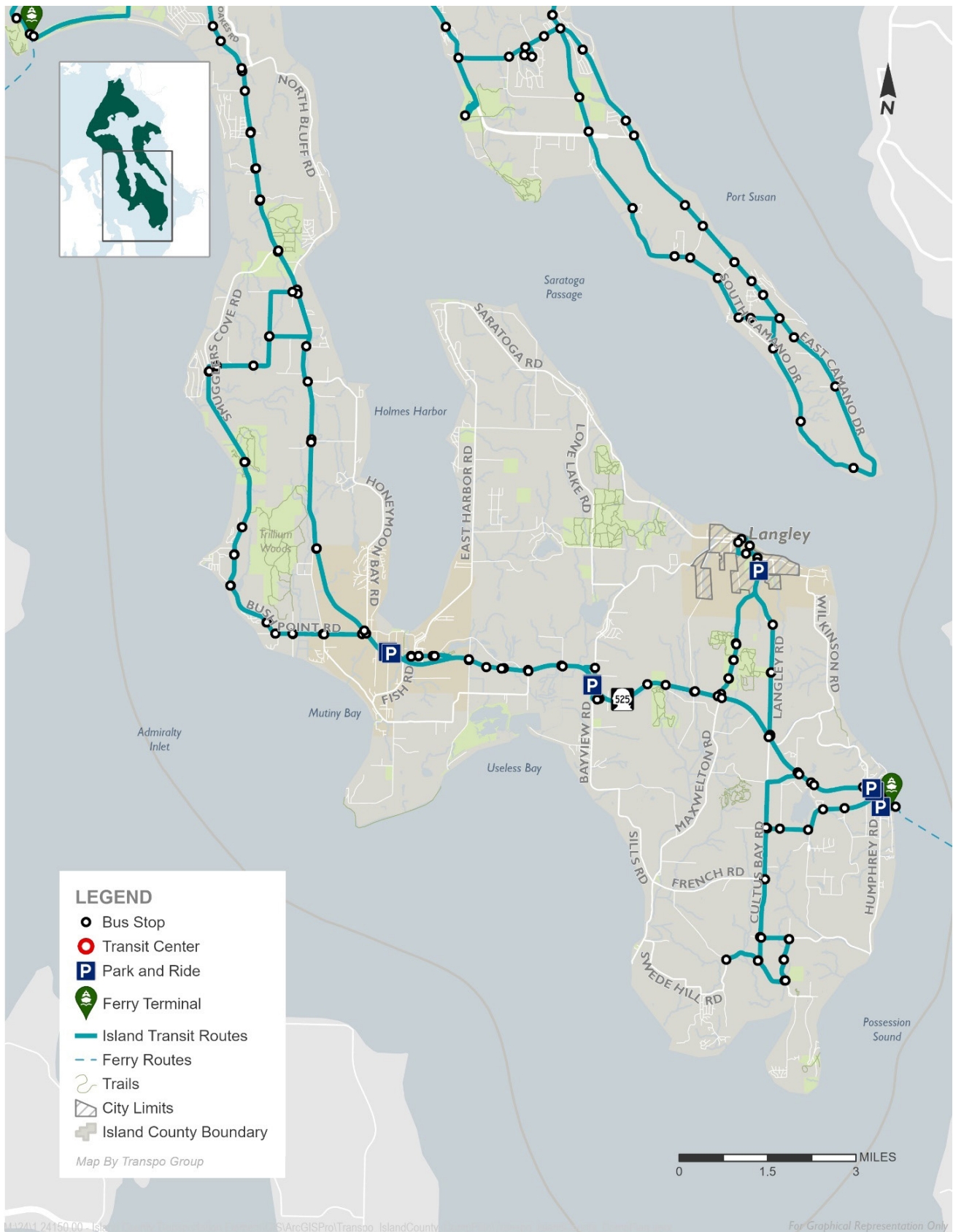
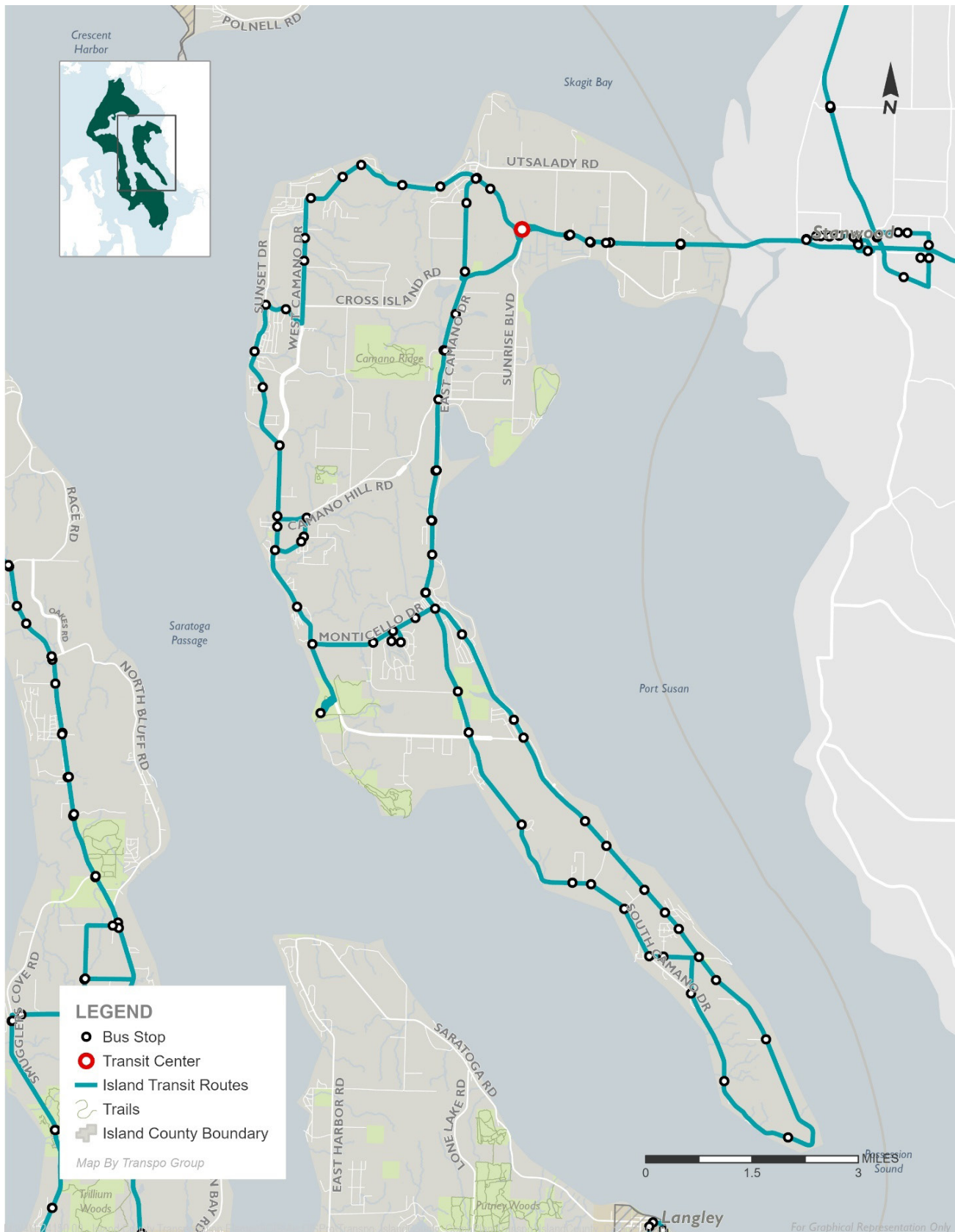


Figure 2-16 Island County Transit Service (Camano)



Paratransit Service

Paratransit service is based on fixed transit service routes that are designed to allow time for a transit vehicle to deviate up to three-fourths of a mile off the fixed route structure to pick up or drop off eligible persons with disabilities. In many cases, route deviation increases ridership on the fixed routes while serving those unable to use the regular fixed route service.

Vanpool Program

Island Transit operates a vanpool program for groups of people that have similar schedules and share a commute to and from work or school. In 1988, Island Transit’s Board of Directors adopted a vanpool administration policy modeled after the policy developed by the Municipality of Metropolitan Seattle’s (Metro) Commuter Pool Program. This policy provides a clear schedule of reimbursements as well as comprehensive rider and driver agreements.

Park-and-Rides

Park-and-rides allow transit users to drive private vehicles to a centralized location and ride transit to their ultimate destination. In rural areas these can be a critical component of the transit system as they extend the reach of transit routes to farther origins or destinations. There are nine park-and-ride lots in Island County at the sites shown in Table 2-7 and Figure 2-14.

Table 2-7 Park-and-Ride Facilities

Name	Location	Bus Routes Served	Number of Parking Spaces
Clinton Park and Ride	SR 525 / Deer Lake Road	1, 58, 60, Clinton Commuter,	200
Bayview Park and Ride	SR 525 / Bayview Road	1, 60,	85
Freeland Park and Ride (Trinity Lutheran Church)	SR 525 / Woodard Road	1	70
Greenbank Park and Ride	SR 525 / Bakken Road	1	20
Langley Noble Creek Transit Park	Camano Avenue / Sandy Point	5, 7, 8	64
Coupeville Prairie Station Transit Park	SR 20 / S Main Street	1, 6	48
Soundview Shopper Park and Ride	SR 20 / Troxell Road	4, 411-W 1, 2, 3, 411-C,	15
Terry’s Corner Park and Ride	SR 532 / Sunrise Boulevard	412C	80
WSDOT Clinton Ferry Parking Lot	6491 Humphrey Road	1, 60, Clinton Commuter	209
Total			824

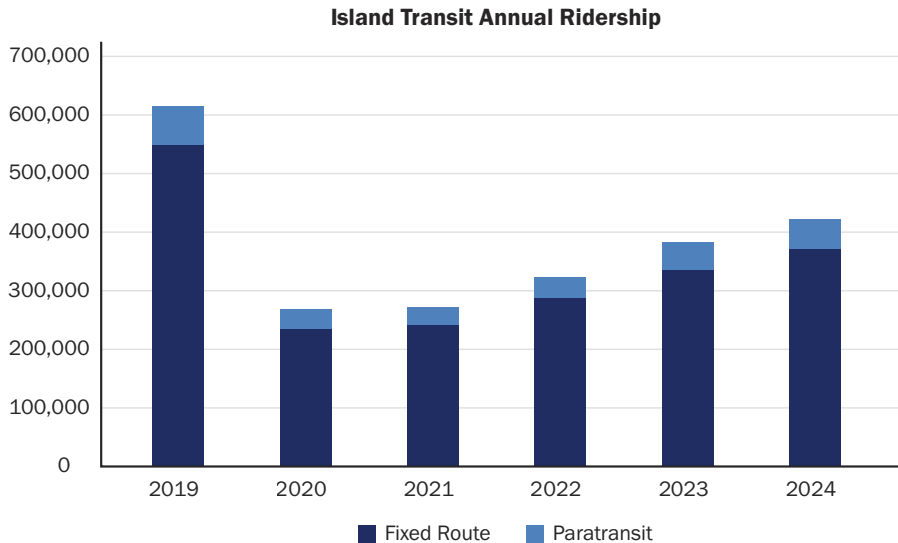
Source: WSDOT Park and Ride Database

As shown in the table, approximately 824 parking spaces are available across all park-and-ride facilities in Island County. The WSDOT Clinton Ferry Parking Lot has the highest number of total parking spaces, with 200 available for personal vehicles. No formal studies on the utilization rate of park and rides in Island County were available at the time of this report.

Transit Ridership

Ridership information is collected by transit operators to observe the annual and seasonal trends for transit service provided. Annual system-wide ridership data was collected from Island Transit for the most recent 6 years of data available. Figure 2-17 shows the annual ridership for fixed route transit services for 2019 through 2024.

Figure 2-17 Historical Island Transit Ridership



As shown in Figure 2-17, Island Transit ridership substantially decreased because of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Island Transit systemwide ridership has been slowly recovering since the 2020 decrease but has only reached approximately 68% of the pre-pandemic peak.

Transit LOS Standard

GMA requirements state that comprehensive plans must include measurable level of service standards for local transit systems. These standards may be based on transit access, capacity, ridership or other methods based on context, but should be created in collaboration with local transit agencies.

Transit service within Island County is maintained and operated by Island Transit, which provides Fixed Route, Vanpool, and Demand Response services on Whidbey and Camano Islands and provides connections to the Skagit Transit and Community Transit networks via shared stop locations in Stanwood, Mt. Vernon, and Anacortes, WA. Island Transit began work on its first Long Range Transit Plan as of Fall 2025 and as such does not yet have well defined LOS goals for the bus network.

In consultation with staff at Island transit, the planning team identified service goals around increasing frequency of service in urban areas, as well as increasing the safety and accessibility of transit throughout the county. Since there is little the county can do in terms of increasing service frequency, Island County will endorse Island Transit's safety and accessibility goals at 47 priority stop locations in urban areas, near schools and at select community destinations. A map of these stop locations along with the current LOS is viewable in section 4.3.

Many stop locations in the county are characterized by high speeds and narrow shoulders with few crossing locations to allow passengers to safely travel to and from bus stops. Bus pullouts that allow buses to pull off busy roads and allow riders to board and alight away from travel lanes are frequent along major routes. However, 28 of the 47 locations lack an accompanying crosswalk nearby which means transit riders frequently attempt to cross highways where vehicles are travelling at speeds of more than 50 miles per hour. In recent years several serious or fatal accidents have occurred at state highway locations ([link](#)) in relation to riders attempting to cross the street when travelling to or from a stop location. Island County will work with Island Transit and WSDOT to consider installing ADA-complaint marked or enhanced crosswalks at bus stop locations where needed along County roads and state highways.

Additionally, of the 47 priority stop locations identified, only 13 have a bus shelter. Shelters are an important amenity and serve to increase the safety and comfort of passengers, as well as improving ADA accessibility and providing community benefits by encouraging transit use. The county proposes to coordinate with Island Transit at the remaining locations so that Island Transit can install shelter structures at stop locations where shelters are not currently installed.

2.6 Ferry Service

Scheduled ferry service to Island County is provided by the Marine Division of the WSDOT, generally referred to as the Washington State Ferries (WSF). This system provides two connections to Whidbey Island via the following routes:

- **Mukilteo–Clinton Route** links southern Whidbey Island at Clinton to the Everett/Seattle metropolitan area at Mukilteo in Snohomish County.
- **Coupeville–Port Townsend Route** links the central portion of Whidbey Island near Coupeville to the Olympia Peninsula at Port Townsend in Jefferson County.

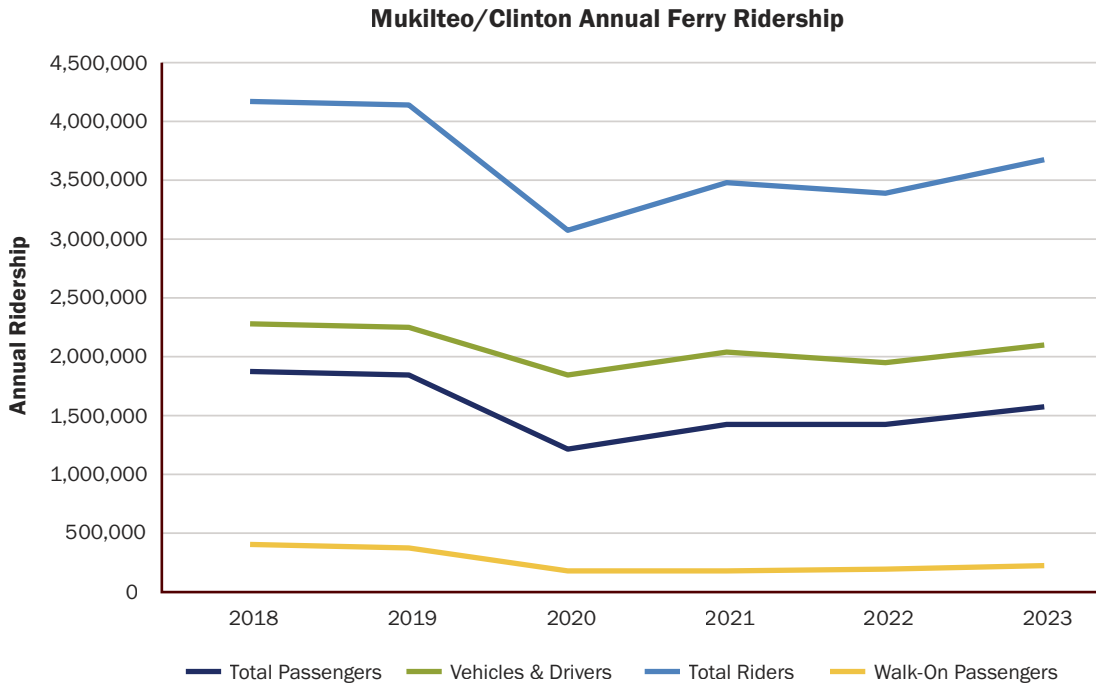
These two routes serve several trip purposes, including recreational-related and tourist trips, commuter-related and business trips, and freight movements as an extension of the highway system. In 2013, WSF completed a comprehensive origin-destination study that documents the travel patterns of their customers. The study was intended to help WSF better match services with customer needs, make ferry operations as efficient as possible, and capture more data that will feed into the ferry travel model for use in the upcoming update of the WSF Long-Range Plan. The complete 2013 study is available on the WSF website⁵.

Mukilteo-Clinton Ridership

WSF provides ferry service for vehicles and pedestrians directly to Whidbey Island from Mukilteo through the ferry terminal located in Clinton. Historically, ferry ridership grew rapidly between the mid-1970s and late-1990s until reaching a generally steady state since about 2000. Ferry ridership to and from Whidbey Island, via the Clinton and the Mukilteo Terminals for the most recent 6 years of available data is shown in Figure 2-18.

⁵ The website for the 2013 study was <https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-10/WSF-2013OriginDestinationSurvey-Full-Report.pdf> at time of writing.

Figure 2-18 Mukilteo/Clinton Annual Ferry Ridership

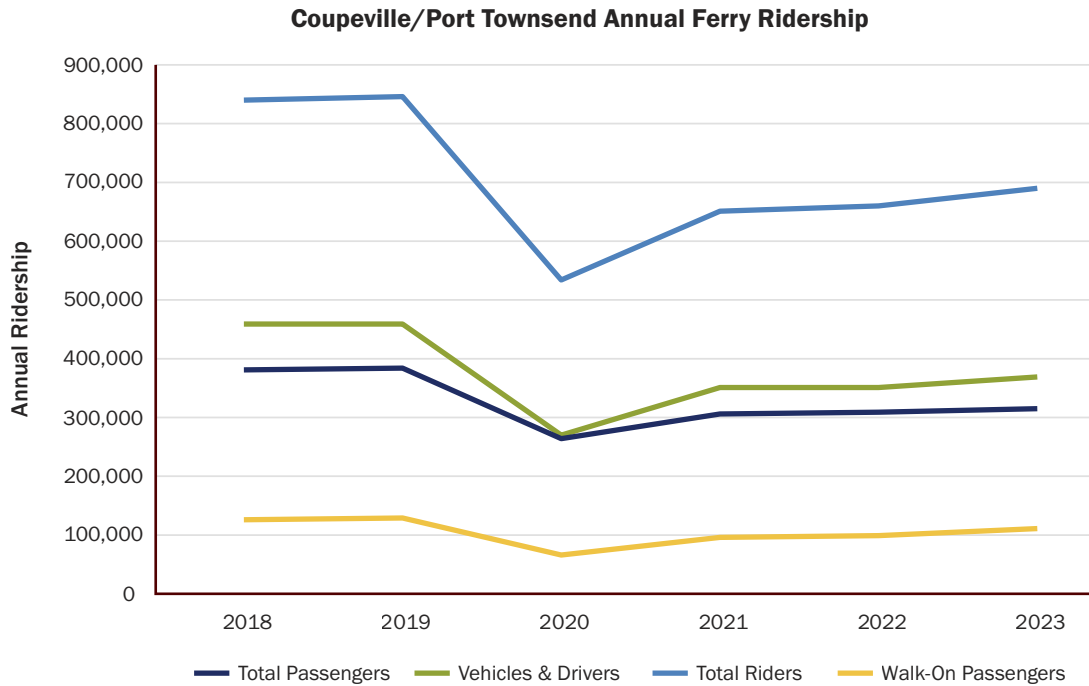


As shown in the chart, there have been approximately 4 million annual riders on the Mukilteo-Clinton route before the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Ridership dropped to approximately 3.1 million during 2020 and has slowly increased to about 3.7 million (88% pre-pandemic levels) in 2023. The Mukilteo-Clinton route has historically catered slightly more to commuters. Pre-pandemic, there were approximately 390,000 annual walk-on passengers. While overall passenger values have increased, walk-on passengers have increased the slowest, back to approximately 230,000 (~60% pre-pandemic levels) in 2023. These ferry riders access the terminal via transit, active transportation modes, or the park-and-ride facilities located near the Clinton terminal.

Coupeville-Port Townsend Ridership

WSF provides ferry service for vehicles and pedestrians directly to Whidbey Island from Port Townsend through the ferry terminal located near Coupeville. Like the Mukilteo-Clinton route, ferry ridership grew rapidly between the mid-1970s and late-1990s. Ferry ridership to and from Whidbey Island, via the Coupeville and the Port Townsend terminals, for the most recent 6 years of available data is shown in Figure 2-19.

Figure 2-19 Coupeville/Port Townsend Ridership



As shown in the figure, there was a significant dip in the number of total passengers during the 2020 COVID pandemic, when overall ridership was down from approximately 840,000 annual passengers to 535,000 (63%). Annual ridership has increased back to approximately 687,000 in 2023 (82% of pre-pandemic levels).

2.7. Other Modes

Air Transportation and Air Access

Island County is served by three privately owned, public-use airports: Whidbey Airpark (W10) near Langley, DeLaurentis Airport (KOKH) near Oak Harbor, and Camano Island Airfield (13W) on Camano Island. These facilities provide general aviation access for residents, visitors, and small-business activity, and they support medical transport, emergency services, and tourism in ways that complement the County’s highway and ferry network. The Island Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) identifies an action to develop an Island Region Aviation System Plan, which will evaluate these civilian airports and related facilities to identify needs, gaps, and opportunities for improved access and resilience. The individually developed aviation Master Plans of each privately owned airport must be integrated with State, Federal and DOD planning documents. Additional aviation information is included in the Land Use element of this Comprehensive Plan.

Rail

No rail service presently exists within Island County, although rail terminals are within close proximity of Whidbey Island and Camano Island at nearby towns, to directly support containerized solid waste transported off Island. Passenger rail service in the region is provided by Sound Transit and Amtrak. While not within the county, rail lines provide key connections for freight and passenger service to the region. Connection to nearby rail facilities may only be made via the highway system or water transportation routes extending out from Island County.

Sound Transit operates Sounder regional commuter transit service. The closest Sounder train station is located in Mukilteo, which is served by the north line that operates between Everett and Seattle. Sounder trains make four roundtrips per weekday and it takes approximately 50 minutes to travel from Mukilteo to Seattle. The closest Amtrak rail stations are located in Everett, Mount Vernon, and Stanwood. Intercity passenger rail service is available on the Cascades route that operates between Vancouver, BC and Eugene, Oregon.

Equestrian Facilities

Currently, there are no public equestrian facilities located in the unincorporated areas of Island County; however, there are multi-use trails including the Kettles Trail in Coupeville, the Putney Woods Trails in Langley, and the Trillium Woods Trails in Greenbank that permit equestrian use. There are also some private riding facilities and trails throughout the County and Langley that have separate horseback riding trails, such as along Anderson Road right-of-way and within a separate easement through Cedars Trail residential development. In addition, there are exercise and riding areas at the county fairground near Langley.

Motorcycles

Motorcycles are a popular option for ferry commuters, particularly with Boeing employees who contend with substantial parking lots surrounding the campus. Due to their small footprint, motorcycles are allowed to park closer to the factory worksite and, like vanpools, are also permitted to bypass long lines of cars at the ferry terminals that are typical during the peak tourist season. These perks make riding a motorbike a reliable way to streamline the commute time for Whidbey Island residents.

A map of existing ferry, and air facilities is shown in Figure 2-20.

Figure 2-20 Ferry Service Routes and Air Facilities



3 TRAVEL FORECASTS EVALUATION

The County maintains its transportation system to accommodate future growth and development. The Growth Management Act (GMA)⁶ requires that the transportation planning horizon be at least ten years in the future. For the 2025 Transportation Element, the County selected 2045 as the forecast year for consistency with the overall comprehensive plan. The longer-range horizon year allows the County to better plan for and scale transportation facilities that are needed as the County grows over the next two decades.

A travel demand model was built to support the County's transportation planning efforts. The model provides a means for forecasting traffic volumes based on population and employment growth allocations for the County.

Ferry service is another important component of the transportation system for Island County that is operated and maintained by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT).

Planning for the two ferry routes operating between Mukilteo-Clinton and Port Townsend-Coupeville is contained in WSF's Long-Range Plan⁷. However, the long-range plan was developed in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic greatly impacted ferry ridership. As such, the ridership forecasts developed in 2019 are out of date and will be updated as part of WSF's next long-range plan. More discussion of ferry operations is provided in Section 3.3.

3.1 Land Use Forecasts

Land use forecasts are based on anticipated changes in population and employment within Island County. The travel demand model utilizes forecast land use assumptions to estimate various types of trips that are applied to the transportation network. The land use forecasts included in the travel demand model are intended for planning purposes only. They represent an estimate of future conditions rather than a planned or desired outcome and do not restrict or require specific land use actions.

The land use assumptions are based on the zoning available at the time the model was created. Future forecasts must also incorporate growth in travel demand entering and exiting the County. These travel demands are based on regional population and employment trends. Detailed assumptions for land use growth within the County are available in the Land Use Element of the Island County 2025 Comprehensive Plan.

⁶ Washington State 36.70A RCW. Available at <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=36.70A>.

⁷ Washington State Department of Transportation, Ferries Division. Available at <https://wsdot.wa.gov/travel/washington-state-ferries/about-us/washington-state-ferries-planning>

3.2 Forecast Travel Conditions

Forecast travel conditions determine where future bottlenecks may occur on the roadway network based on 2045 forecast travel demand and fully funded transportation system projects. Forecast travel demand is based on the forecast land use contained in the travel model and allocated to Transportation Analysis Zones (TAZs). TAZs are defined geographies that contain a mix of land uses and generate trip estimates based on population and employment forecasts. The aggregation of those trips on County roadways provides planners with a future snapshot of the future operating conditions of the multimodal transportation system.

2045 Baseline Traffic Volumes & Improvements

The travel demand model was calibrated with 2024 traffic counts and used to forecast 2045 traffic volumes and travel patterns based on anticipated changes in land use. The forecast traffic volumes show small changes in overall growth on roadways within Island County. The highest areas of traffic growth are north of Oak Harbor, with minor traffic growth in the City of Oak Harbor. Roadways within the communities of Langley and Freeland also are anticipated to have additional traffic volumes due to future land use growth concentrated in these communities. 2045 average daily traffic volumes are shown in Figure 3-1 through Figure 3-3.

The 2045 baseline model and LOS results were developed assuming no roadway or intersection improvements from the existing roadway network.

Figure 3-1 Forecast 2045 Traffic Volumes (North Whidbey)



Figure 3-2 Forecast 2045 Traffic Volumes (South Whidbey)



Figure 3-3 Forecast 2045 Traffic Volumes (Camano)



Forecast Evaluation

The evaluation of the forecast travel model includes an operations analysis of key intersections within the County. The intersections included in the forecast evaluation are the same locations evaluated with the Highway Capacity Manual (7th Edition) methodology described in the Inventory of Existing Transportation Facilities (Chapter 2). The outcomes of the forecast evaluation are typically used to identify future project locations to improve safety, mobility, and access on County roadways outside of any potential projects driven by concurrency.

The forecast evaluation showed that the majority of traffic continues to travel along state routes. There is one intersection along state routes forecast to have notable change in intersection LOS:

- **SR 525 / Bush Point Road & SR 525 / Honeymoon Bay Road** – This intersection operates at LOS E under existing conditions and degrades to LOS F under forecast conditions. The stop-controlled westbound minor leg from Freeland experiences moderate delays, with the majority of the traffic turning left onto SR 525. With additional traffic volumes on SR 525 more of these drivers will have fewer breaks in traffic to turn onto the highway. The side street traffic volumes are relatively low compared to the overall traffic at the intersection

3.3 Ferry Service Forecasts

In 2019, WSF finalized its 2040 Long Range Plan (LRP). The LRP provided a twenty-year plan for ferry service expansion and enhancements to accommodate anticipated ferry ridership growth. However, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, limited vessel availability and an ongoing shortage of U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) credentialed crew has presented significant challenges for WSF. While WSF has made some service improvements since 2019, WSF has primarily been focused on restoring ferry capacity to pre-pandemic levels, as noted in the 2023 Long Range Plan Progress Report.

The Washington State Ferry Service Contingency Plan, published in January 2024 (updated March 2025), outlines WSF's immediate plans to restore and enhance service. The plan notes that WSF requires at least 26 vessels to provide pre-pandemic level service, but currently WSF only has 21 vessels in operation that range from 7 to 66 years old. WSF has funding for five new ferries needed to meet baseline service levels, but the vessels are unlikely to enter service until 2029.

Operating existing “full service” on every route requires 19 vessels in the summer, 18 in the spring and fall “shoulder” seasons (generally Mother’s Day to Indigenous Peoples’ Day) and 17 in the late fall/winter/early spring. Throughout 2023, WSF operated with 14-16 vessels in service for extended periods of time, and in 2024 operated with 15-16 vessels in service the entire year. Due to the increasing age of the fleet and a long history of deferred vessel maintenance, WSF believes planning for a baseline of 17 vessels in service, with up to 18 available during the peak season, is the most reasonable projection until new vessels enter service in 2029. With limited vessel availability, WSF will be unable to operate full service on every route until new vessels are constructed and delivered.

The plan specifically notes that if WSF is unable to meet the 18-vessel peak / 17-vessel off-peak baseline, that WSF will likely have to reduce the Port Townsend / Coupeville service to one-boat (down from two) in the shoulder/summer seasons. This will increase delays and reduce overall ferry ridership to/from Port Townsend and Coupeville.

The WSF Service Contingency Plan also outlines planned staffing increases and other priority investments needed to bring service levels back to pre-pandemic levels and minimize trip cancellations.

As a result, WSF service in Island County is likely to face some disruption, cancellation and service cuts for the next few years while the WSF staffing and vessel quantities reach pre-pandemic levels. Given these disruptions, further forecasting of ferry ridership growth is not included due to the overall uncertainty with the WSF service. Once the WSF LRP is updated again (in 2029 or before), the forecasts and estimated impacts to the Coupeville-Port Townsend and the Clinton-Mukilteo routes will be included in the next update of the Transportation Element.

3.4 Transit Service

Transit service is anticipated to continue serving as a fundamental piece of the transportation network. The COVID-19 pandemic substantially impacted transit services and ridership. Transit services across the country reduced capacity and restricted services, partially due to staffing issues and partially to maintain social distancing. Island Transit's fixed route and paratransit ridership dropped off significantly in 2020 and has not fully recovered.

Island Transit recently began the process of developing its first Long-Range Plan. The plan will include a robust and meaningful public outreach to better understand the needs of both county residents and visitors to guide Island Transit service over the next twenty years. Island Transit has recently been delivering on the Island Transit Maximized initiative that identified areas of improvement, leading to enhancements in regular and seasonal services, including Sunday service, new on-demand zones, later hours, and new fixed routes. Island Transit has also pivoted away from transitioning to hydrogen buses due to changes in federal priorities.

The Island Human Services Transportation Plan (HSTP) was updated in 2022. The plan focuses on the transportation needs of people with special needs, including seniors, people with low-income, and people with disabilities. The HSTP documents existing services, identifies needs/service gaps, and defines regional priorities and recommends projects for state and federal grant funding. Plan implementation projects include the following:

- Sustain Rural Public Transportation Service North Sound Regional Connector (Island Regional Connector)
- Sustain mobility management programs
- Implement first/last mile on-demand service
- Continue funding Snow Goose Transit – fixed route with deviations in Camano, Stanwood and Arlington
- Regional Mobility Management Coordination for all of Island County and off-island needs
- Whidbey Island Veterans Transportation Services and Healthcare Access Coordination
- Establish Ongoing Coordination between project partners (healthcare providers, transit agencies, non-profits, government organizations, etc.)

4 TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS PLAN

The transportation systems plan provides a long-range strategy for Island County to address future transportation issues and needs. Transportation system improvements are necessary to accommodate the travel needs of the projected population and employment growth as described in the Forecast Travel Evaluation. Because only modest growth is expected, the County's emphasis should be on preserving the existing transportation system and implementing safety projects rather than adding more roadway capacity.

Additionally, opportunities to enhance the connectivity of the transportation network should be considered. The connectivity of transportation systems is increasingly important as local, state, and federal planning agencies who seek to improve the efficiency and cost effectiveness of transportation systems. System connectivity is also important for increasing physical activity and integrating transportation system planning with broader land use planning objectives.

This chapter begins with a description of the travel characteristics for the range of modes that comprise the transportation system. Roadways are used by nearly every travel mode, not just personal vehicles, and represent the bulk of the transportation improvements described later in the chapter. Highways in the County make key connections to the ferry system which is a critical component for inter-County travel. While ferry service is the primary function of the State of Washington, connections to ferry terminals are impacted by projects initiated by the County. The non-motorized transportation network supports commute, utility, and recreational trips throughout the County. The following sections describe the common characteristics among these transportation modes within the County.

4.1 Road and Highway Systems Plan

Roads and state highways are the core of the transportation system serving the County and its communities. All major routes that connect Island County to surrounding communities are managed by the State via bridges and ferry terminals. The road network provides for the overall movement of people and goods, for a wide range of travel modes that includes private vehicles, transit, vanpools, carpools, trucks, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Island County as part of IRTPO will advocate for maintenance and upgrades to SR20 Deception and Canoe Pass bridges and the SR 532 corridor (Camano Gateway and Davis Slough). This advocacy aligns with IRTPO's four key pillars of its responsibilities as a Regional Transportation Planning Organization and Island County's Economic Development goals.

Planned improvements to the state highway and county roadway system are implemented on an annual basis through the development of six-year Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP) by Island County and Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). In these six-year programs, emphasis is given to safety improvements and roadway preservation.

4.2 Bridges and Critical Crossings Systems Plan

Bridges and other critical crossings that, if disrupted, would substantially impair access to and within Island County require coordinated planning that goes beyond any single jurisdiction or agency. Island County will work with its cities and towns, Island Transit, Island RTPO, the Port districts, Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, and neighboring jurisdictions to clearly define the transportation, emergency access, economic, and lifeline roles of structures such as the Deception and Canoe Pass bridges and the SR 532 corridor (Camano Gateway and Davis Slough). This shared understanding will include how these crossings support daily commuting, freight and goods movement, tourism, and disaster response and recovery for island communities.

Economic Development Element Section 5.4 also indicates the County's intention to advocate with the State for bridge upgrades.

4.3 Active Transportation Systems Plan

The countywide Active Transportation Network includes facilities for both pedestrians and bicyclists. These modes have many different characteristics but share many facilities throughout the County including roadway shoulders, multiuse pathways, unpaved trails, sidewalks, and shared roadways in certain locations.

Pedestrians

Every trip begins and ends with a walk. People walk to their cars and drive somewhere where they will walk into a building or facility. Or they need to walk to the bus stop. The County hopes to connect more destinations with walking paths to encourage walking between trip destinations. Walking paths not only help people get from “Point A to Point B” but also promote physical activity and recreation. The County will continue to develop pedestrian and bicycle facilities as part of its transportation system improvements and has adopted street standards that provide for a range of facilities including sidewalks, wider roadway shoulders, and multiuse pathways.

A viable pedestrian network consists of connections to pedestrian generators, such as major employers, schools, residential areas, parks, and transit stops through a system of pedestrian facilities. Land use and neighborhood street design patterns can also form barriers to pedestrian travel. For example, overly large blocks and the lack of mid-block crossings cause pedestrians to travel further to reach local destinations, often resulting in a decision to utilize a vehicle for short trips that could otherwise be completed on foot. The Active Transportation Network.

Bicycles

Bicycling is an important and growing mode of travel for people in Island County. When appropriately planned, bicycle routes have a role in reducing congestion, improving air quality, providing travel choices, encouraging exercise and recreation, and providing greater mobility for those both with and without access to a motor vehicle. Encouraging or facilitating bicycle tourism may also represent an important economic development opportunity for the County. The County encourages the use of bicycles; endeavors to coordinate linkages between off-road and on-road bicycle facilities; considers impacts on bicycles when designing and engineering roadways; and emphasizes continuous bicycle linkages to existing facilities. The County is interested in incorporating adjacent bicycle lanes, wide shoulders, and other design treatments, as appropriate, into roadway construction projects whenever the right-of-way is sufficient and funding can be secured.

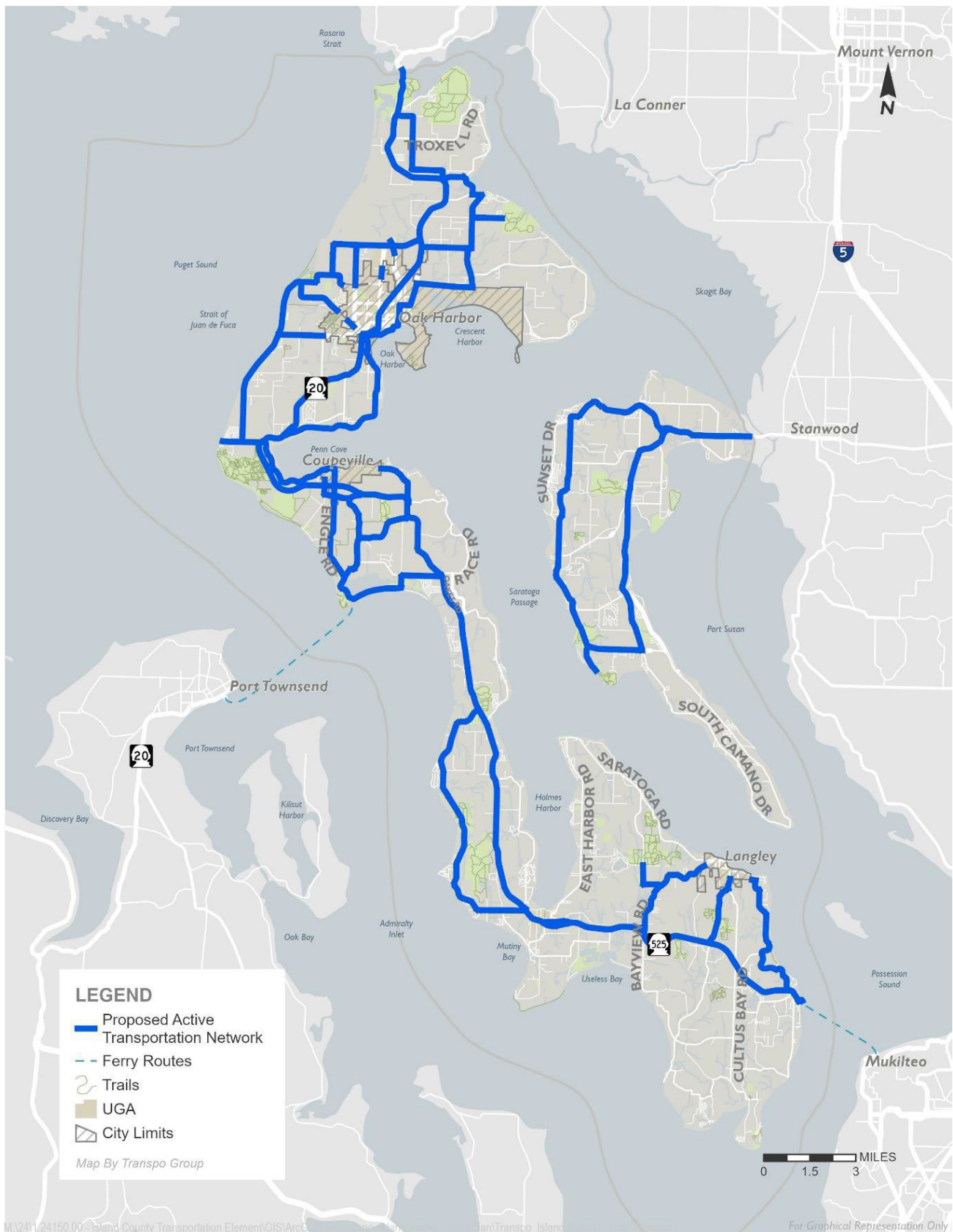
The bicycle network includes a range of transportation enhancement investments on these corridors to facilitate and increase the number of bicycling trips. Specific bicycling improvements may include widening shoulders on existing or planned roadways, installing signs to assist cyclists with wayfinding and to alert drivers to the likelihood of cyclist presence, or developing on street and off-street bicycle paths. For many corridors in the County’s bicycle network, specific roadway improvements have not yet been identified.

Active Transportation Network

Figure 4-1 shows the planned active transportation network which includes both planned and existing facilities. Developing new facilities for active modes can be difficult in a rural context. Limited right-of-way available for shoulder widening, along with prohibitively high construction costs must be taken into consideration. Additionally, the land use context and reality of living in a rural environment demands a different societal expectation for what type of walking and bicycle facilities can be provided. In developing the active network, efforts were made to ensure that roadways with existing shoulders formed the backbone of the network.

Additionally, multiuse pathways or designated bike routes that already existed were incorporated into the network. The planned facilities are all multi-use and can be assumed to accommodate all active modes, including walking and bicycling and micromobility vehicles.

Figure 4-1 Planned Active Transportation Network



Active Transportation Network – Existing Levels of Service

Figure 4-2 through Figure 4-4 show the current level of service along the planned active transportation network using the criteria described in section 2.3 of this plan. Notably, US Bike Route 97 is included in the active network. This bike route was established in 2011 and approved by AASHTO, however no comprehensive study of the suitability of the included roads was completed at that time. USBR97 is therefore included in the network, but all sections are symbolized with a yellow dash to indicate “further study needed” since in many cases bringing the route up to the county’s LOS standards for bicycles may not be feasible.

Segments identified as substandard are included in the 20-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) list where specific deficiencies are identified and associated planning level costs have been calculated.

Figure 4-2 Active Transportation Level of Service (North Whidbey)



Figure 4-3 Active Transportation Level of Service (South Whidbey)

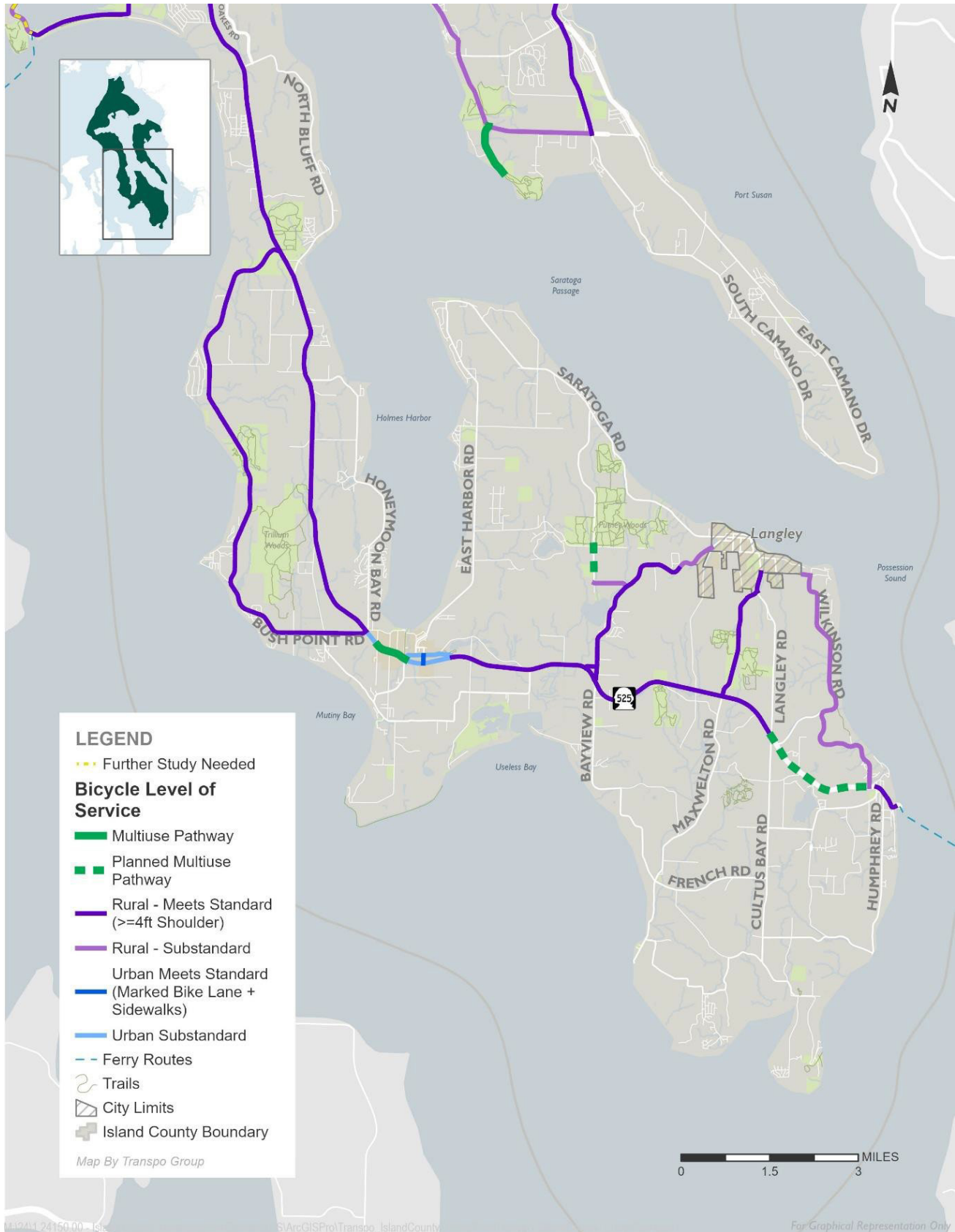
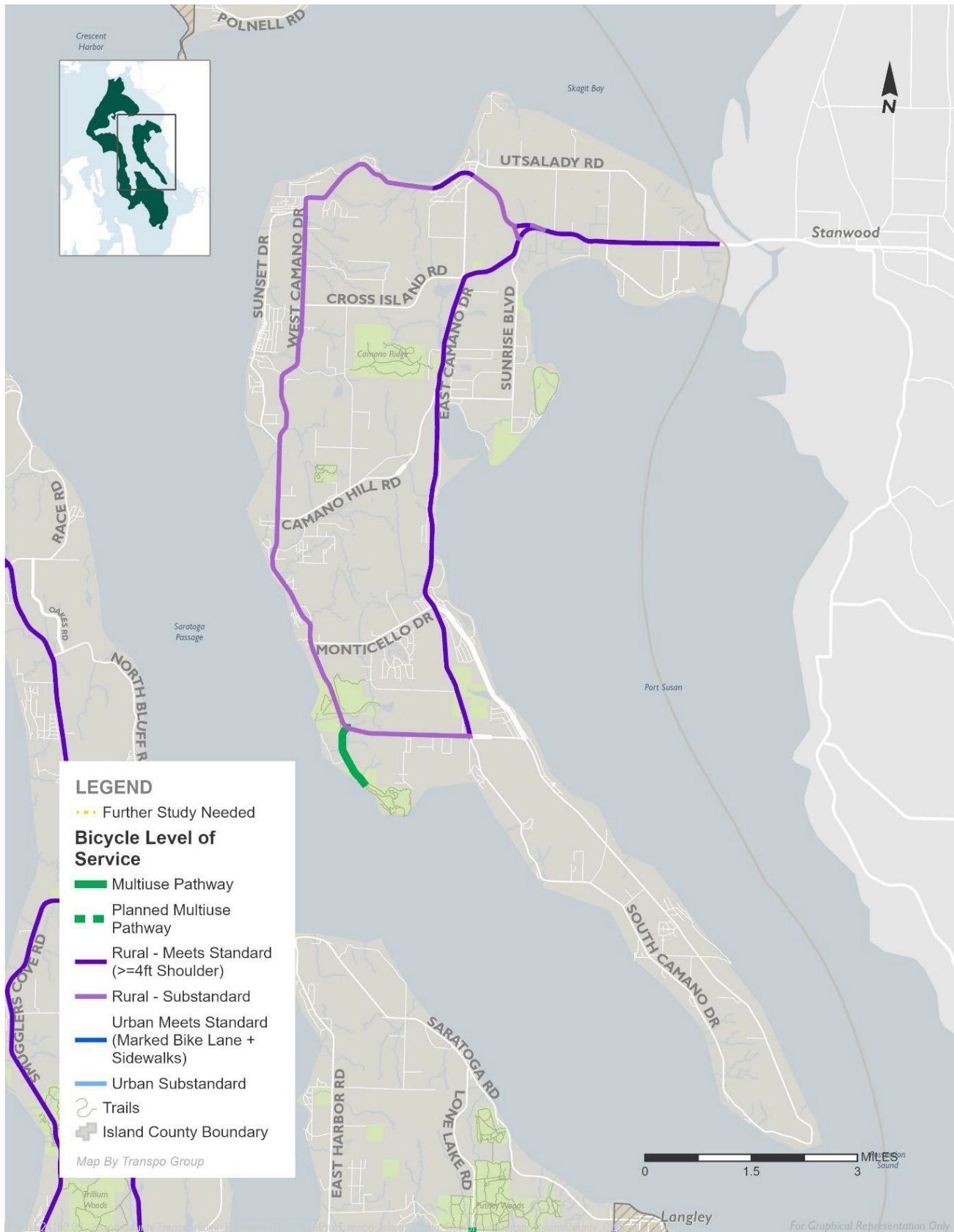


Figure 4-4 Active Transportation Level of Service (Camano)

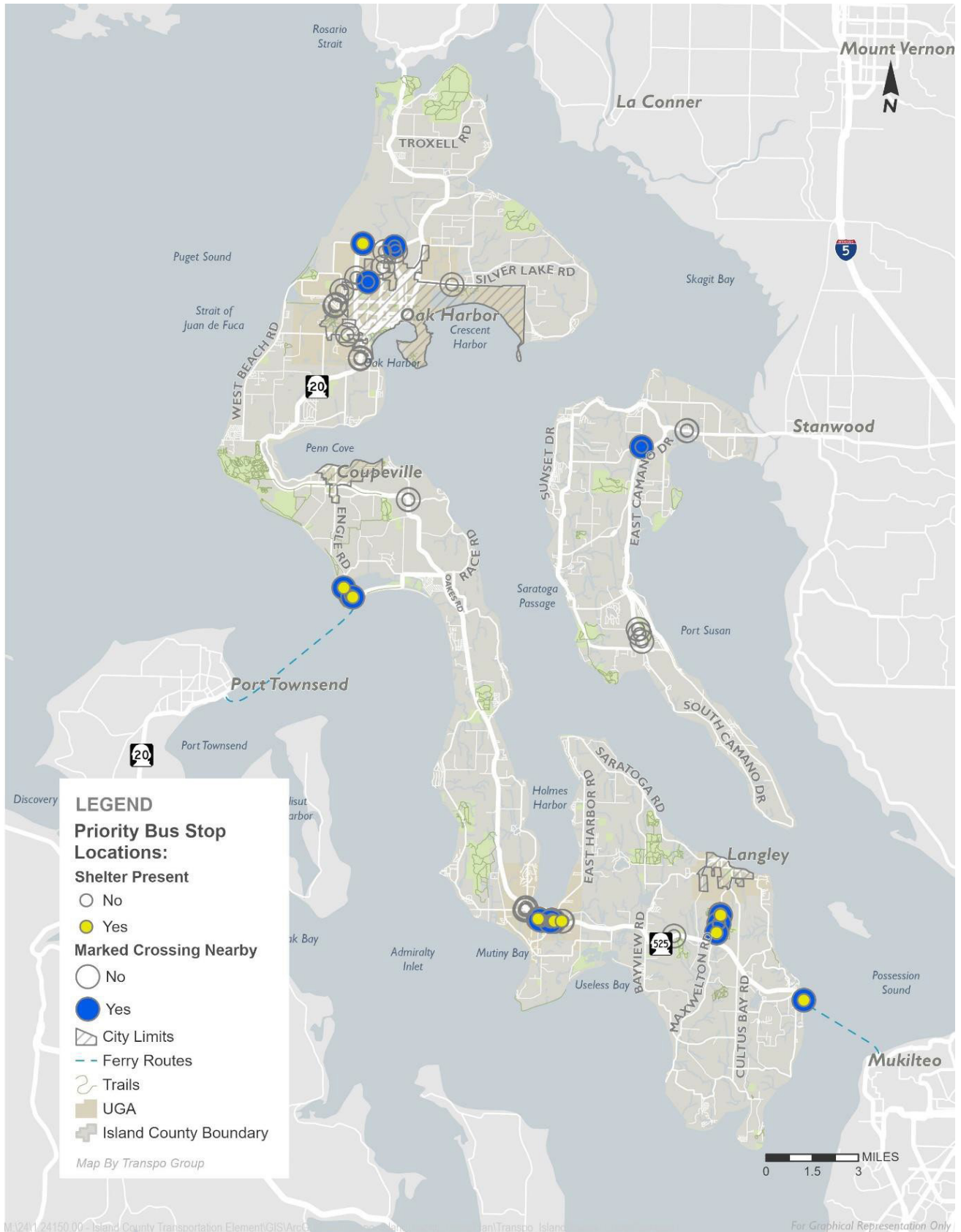


4.4 Transit

Improvements to the transit system are the primary responsibility of Island Transit. As of September 2025, Island Transit has been focused on restoring ridership to pre-pandemic levels with recently installed Sunday services as part of the Island Transit Maximized initiative. Given that Island Transit is responsible for providing transit service and controls routes and frequency, Island County is focused on providing access to transit stops, as described in Section 2.4.

Figure 4-5 shows the location of 47 bus stop locations identified as a high priority for improvements based on their location within UGA areas or proximity to schools and other important destinations in the county. Yellow and blue indicate the presence of shelters and crosswalks respectively while hollow points indicate the absence of one or both amenities at a stop. Transit stops lacking shelters and nearby marked crossings present opportunities for the County and Island Transit to improve accessibility to transit.

Figure 4-5 Transit Level of Service



4.5 Ferry Service

Improvements to ferry service in the County are the primary responsibility of the Washington State Ferries (WSF) with support services provided by WSDOT, Island County, IRTPO, and Island Transit. WSF maintains the Clinton-Mukilteo Route and the Coupeville-Port Townsend Route. At this time there are no service increases planned for any of the routes serving Island County.

Many ferry commuters rely on personal vehicles for one or both legs of their trips to and from work. Some park near the Clinton terminal and walk onto the ferry, then connect to transit.

Others leave a vehicle in Mukilteo, though demand for overnight parking there is high and the supply is very limited. The City of Mukilteo currently discourages overnight parking.

As discussed in Section 3.3, future ferry service enhancements have generally been on hold as WSF has prioritized restoring ferry service to pre-pandemic levels. WSF will develop their next long-range plan in the next 5 years, which will outline their plans for service expansion and enhancements at that time. Over the next few years, WSF will continue to prioritize replacing aging fleet vehicles and building up crew capacity to establish pre-pandemic ferry service.

4.6 Other Transportation Modes

Air, Rail and Equestrian

The other modes discussed in Chapter 2 are not anticipated to have future changes that are under the jurisdiction of Island County. As such, these modes are not discussed in this chapter.

4.7 Transportation Projects & Programs

Transportation projects and programs are vital to maintain and enhance transportation within and through the County. These are anticipated to serve the County's safety, circulation, and active transportation goals over the planning horizon year of 2045.

The project improvements address safety, capacity, connectivity, and expanded active transportation facilities. Improvements also cover upgrades to existing roads and construction of new roadways, stormwater management / fish passage and interconnected trail systems to support the forecast economic development and growth in the County. The project improvement types are described below, with the complete list of projects summarized in Table 4-1 and in Figure 4-6 to Figure 4-8.

Shoulder Widening Program

An ongoing work program focused on installing shoulders on arterial and collector roadways. This program also assists the active transportation system to improve conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists. Potential sites are evaluated and prioritized based on traffic volumes, accident history, roadway conditions, and the availability of funds. Right of way needs are identified and acquired as necessary.

Intersection Improvements

Intersection improvements were identified where existing or forecast operational deficiencies, as well as the need to realign intersections to improve safety. The projects are intended to improve operations at the identified intersections, improve safety or better accommodate active transportation users.

Roadway Improvements

Roadway improvements were identified to reconstruct roadways where enhanced stabilization is required, additional left turn lanes are needed to better accommodate vehicles turning off state routes, or where new roadways may be desired. The projects are intended to improve traffic operations, improve safety and/or reinforce roadway structures.

Trail System Expansion

Several expansions to the County's trail network are included as part of the transportation improvements identified in the transportation element. These improvements are aimed at expanding the trail system to provide enhanced connections to serve both local transportation needs, and tourist/visitor needs. These projects are intended to improve active transportation options across the County and support the construction of a countywide active transportation network.

Active Transportation Improvements

Active transportation improvements include the construction of sidewalks, bike lanes or multiuse trails. The county planned active transportation network and multimodal level of service standard requires construction of sidewalks and bike lanes along key roadways located within the urban growth areas. In addition, several multiuse paths (10-12' paved pathways) have been identified to accommodate active users across the county. These improvements, like the train system expansion, are intended to improve travel options for active users.

Countywide Spot Improvements

County staff and consultants identified roadway improvements to reconstruct roadways where enhanced stabilization is required, additional left turn lanes are needed to better accommodate vehicles turning off state routes, or where new roadways may be desired. The projects are intended to improve traffic operations, improve safety and/or reinforce roadway structures.

Table 4-1 2044 Transportation Improvement Project List

Project ID	Project Type	Roadway	Project Description	Cost
TE-11	Active Transportation	Goldie Rd	Add bike lanes, 5' sidewalks to both sides of Goldie Rd from Halyard Ln to Christian Road	\$2,450,000
TE-12	Active Transportation	Oak Harbor Rd	Add bike lanes, 5' sidewalks to both sides of Oak Harbor Rd from Gun Club Rd south ~1380 ft to existing sidewalk	\$1,590,000
TE-13	Active Transportation	Ault Field Rd	Stripe bike lanes, add 5' sidewalks on south side on Ault Field Rd from Heller Rd RAB to N Oak Harbor Rd	\$2,400,000
TE-14	Active Transportation	Heller St	Add bike lanes, 5' sidewalks on east side of Heller Street from NW Crosby Avenue to Family Bible Church Entrance	\$565,000
TE-18	Active Transportation	Swantown Road	Add sidewalks, bike lanes on Swantown Road from Liberty Ln to SW Heller St	\$740,000

Project ID	Project Type	Roadway	Project Description	Cost
TE-19	Active Transportation	Engle Rd	Widen shoulders to 4' on Engle Rd from Fort Casey Rd to Keyston Ferry Landing	\$2,210,000
TE-22	Active Transportation	Main St	Sidewalk on north side of Main St from SR 525 to Harbor Ave, restripe on-street parking for bike lanes	\$650,000
TE-26	Active Transportation	Camano Avenue	Add multiuse path from Sandy Point Rd to Fairgrounds Road	\$550,000
TE-32	Active Transportation	NW Broadway St	Widen and pave existing gravel path on east side of NW Broadway from SR 20 to City Limits (Oakmont St)	\$350,000
TE-33	Active Transportation	SR 20	Install 5' sidewalk on both sides of street from Eagle Vista to Waterloo	\$1,410,000
TE-35	Active Transportation	Main St / Scott Road	Add sidewalk on one side of E Main St / Scott Road from S Harbor Road to SR 525	\$1,690,000
TIP-12	Countywide	Misc. Intersection Alignment Improvement Projects	Improving safety by realigning intersections to be close to perpendicular	\$510,000
TIP-18	Countywide	Misc. Minor Safety Improvements and Project Developments	Small projects to improve safety, or initial project development	\$1,325,000
TIP-19	Countywide	Evaluate Horizontal Curves for Safety Improvements	Countywide horizontal curves for safety improvements	\$405,000
TIP-21	Countywide	Install Guiderails as needed	Countywide installation of guard-rails as needed	\$50,000
TIP-22	Countywide	Speed Limit Evaluation / Changes	Countywide speed limit changes	\$25,000
TIP-24	Countywide	Non-compliant regulatory and warning sign replacement	Countywide regulatory and warning signing replacement	\$490,000
TE-04	Further Study Needed	SR 525	Study Addition of Multiuse Path on south side of SR 525 from Fish Rd to Scott Rd	TBD
TE-05	Further Study Needed	Madrona Way	Further Study Needed - US BR 97 from SR 20 to Coupeville Limits	TBD
TE-06	Further Study Needed	US BR 97 (Ducken Rd / Monkey Hill Rd)	Further Study Needed - US BR 97 from SR 20 to W Henni Rd	TBD

Project ID	Project Type	Roadway	Project Description	Cost
TE-08	Further Study Needed	US BR 97 (E Henni Rd, Imperial Lane, Jones Rd)	Further Study Needed - US BR 97 from W Henni Rd to E Frostad Rd	TBD
TE-09	Further Study Needed	US BR 97 (Taylor Rd)	Further Study Needed - US BR 97 from E Frostad RD to E Fakkema Rd	TBD
TE-15	Further Study Needed	Swantown Road	Further Study Needed - active transportation improvements on Swantown from Wieldraayer Rd to Fairway Dr	TBD
TE-30	Further Study Needed	US BR 97 (Scenic Heights Rd, Penn Cove Rd)	Further Study Needed - US BR 97 from southern Oak Harbor City limits to SR 20	TBD
TE-31	Further Study Needed	Marona Way / Nw Coveland St / N Main St	Further Study Needed - US BR 97 from western Coupeville limits to southern limits	TBD
TE-36	Intersection	SR 525 / Honeymoon Bay Rd	Install RAB or signal	\$5,160,000
TIP-13	Intersection	Swede Hill Road / Burley Road Intersection Improvements	Improve safety by realigning the Burley Road approach to Swede Hill Rd	\$625,000
TIP-14	Intersection	Monkey Hill Road / Henni Road Realignment	Improve safety by realigning the intersection	\$655,000
TIP-15	Intersection	East Camano Drive / Cross Island Road Intersection Improvements	Intersection improvements at East Camano Dr / Cross Island Rd / Arrowhead Rd (CSAP says RAB)	\$4,370,000
TIP-16	Intersection	East Camano Dr / McElroy Roundabout	Construct RAB at intersection of East Camano Drive / McElroy Drive	\$3,575,000
TIP-17	Intersection	Heggenes Road Intersection Realignments	Improve Safety by realigning Heggenes Rd / Orr Rd	\$120,000
TIP-23	Intersection	North Camano Dr & Utsalady Dr Guardrail Replacement	Replace non-standard guardrails	\$1,089,000
TIP-44	Intersection	East Camano Dr, Monticello Dr, Elger Bay Rd Intersection Improvements	Install Signals or RABs as needed	\$5,150,000
IB-05	Roadway	SR 20 Corridor Improvements - Cedar Hollow to Terry Road	Provide left turns lanes at intersections, or RABs. Add wildlife signing.	\$11,690,000

Project ID	Project Type	Roadway	Project Description	Cost
TIP-05	Roadway	South Whidbey Industrial Park Road	Provide public access to the light industrial zone portion of Crawford Rd.	TBD
TIP-10	Roadway	Cultus Bay Road Reconstruction	Bailey Rd to Jewett Rd	\$2,850,000
TIP-11	Roadway	Cultus Bay Road Reconstruction	French Rd to Bailey Rd	\$3,950,000
TIP-20	Roadway	Karen Way Shoulder Stabilization Phase 2	Stabilize shoulder to prevent roadway collapse	\$650,000
IB-14	Shoulder Widening	Sandy Point Rd Traffic Calming	5 ft paved shoulder (4 ft additional pavement)	\$2,470,000
TE-03	Shoulder Widening	SR 20	Widen shoulders to 4' on SR 20 from just north of Race Rd 5477 ft	\$3,160,000
TE-07	Shoulder Widening	Fort Casey Road	Widen shoulders to 4' on Fort Casey Road from Terry Rd to Engle Rd	\$8,610,000
TE-10	Shoulder Widening	E Sleeper Rd	Widen shoulders to 4' on E Sleeper Rd from Taylor Rd to Dugualla State Park	\$2,880,000
TE-16	Shoulder Widening	Swantown Road	Widen shoulders to 4' on Swantown Road from Wieldraayer Rd Crosby Rd	\$3,660,000
TE-17	Shoulder Widening	Terry Rd	Widen shoulders to 4' on Terry Road from Coupeville City Limits to SR 20	\$2,560,000
TE-20	Shoulder Widening	Patmore Rd	Widen shoulders to 4' on Patmore Rd from Fort Casey Rd to SR 20	\$5,790,000
TE-21	Shoulder Widening	SR 20	Widen shoulders to 4' on SR 20 from Wanamaker Rd to just west of 525 / Race Rd intersection	\$3,530,000
TE-23	Shoulder Widening	Andreason Rd	Widen shoulders to 4' on Andreason Rd from Lone Lake Rd to Bayview Rd	\$1,710,000
TE-27	Shoulder Widening	Sandy Point Rd	Widen shoulders to 4' on Sandy Point Road from Clara Cornu Ln to Wilkinson Rd	\$360,000
TE-28	Shoulder Widening	Bob Galbreath Rd	Widen shoulders to 4' on Bob Galbreath Rd from SR 525 to Zimmerman Rd	\$2,050,000
TE-29	Shoulder Widening	Camano Drive / Mountainview Rd	Widen shoulders to 4' on Camano Drive from Nellie St to Elger Bay Rd	\$26,400,000
TIP-02	Shoulder Widening	Shoulder Widening Program	Ongoing program to cover design and right of way research of additional shoulder width	\$525,000
TIP-03	Shoulder Widening	Sunrise Boulevard Shoulder Widening	Shoulder widening on Sunrise Boulevard from SR 532 to Russel Rd	\$3,825,000

Project ID	Project Type	Roadway	Project Description	Cost
TIP-06	Shoulder Widening	Scenic Heights Road Shoulder Widening	Shoulder widening on Scenic Heights Rd from Monroe Landing Rd. to north of Balda Rd.	\$6,650,000
TIP-07	Shoulder Widening	SR 20 Shoulder Widening: Race to Welcher	This section of SR 20 has minimal shoulders. The project will provide Four (4)-foot shoulders on both sides of the highway.	\$5,400,000
TIP-09	Shoulder Widening	Bayview Road Shoulder Widening	Sunlight Dr to Ewing Rd	\$2,770,000
NI-05	Study	Neighborhood Traffic Management Program	Continue funding the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program	TBD
NI-07	Study	Safe Routes to School Plan	Develop a Safe Routes to School Plan in Island County to improve safety and mobility for children by enabling and encouraging them to walk and bicycle to school. Island County Public Health proposes piloting this program on Camano Island before expanding to other school districts as efforts to improve routes to school will also address locations of concern and other safety concerns.	TBD
NI-11	Study	Active Transportation Plan	Develop an Island County Active Transportation Plan to identify and improve active transportation connections and facilities.	TBD
NI-17	Study	Intersection Traffic Studies	Conduct traffic analysis studies on priority locations to determine intersection controls. Consider a compact roundabout at SR 525 and Double Bluff Road	TBD
TIP-40	Trail	Misc. Trail Projects	Small trail projects to improve or expand the trail system for transportation	\$300,000
TIP-41	Trail	Kettles - Fort Ebey Trail Connector	Improvements to an existing trail connecting the paved portion of the Kettles Trail to Ford Ebey State Park	\$133,000
TIP-42	Trail	Clinton to Ken's Corner Trail	New multi-use trail along SR 525 connecting Clinton to Langley Rd	\$12,030,000
TIP-43	Trail	Rhododendron Park Road to Patmore Road Trail	Install multi-use trail between Rhododendron Park Road and Patmore Road	\$3,370,000
WSDOT-01	Intersection	SR 532 / Rekdal Rd / Juniper Beach Road	Install intersection improvements to address recent fatal collision	TBD

Project ID	Project Type	Roadway	Project Description	Cost
WSDOT-02	Intersection	SR 20 / Frostad Rd	Install intersection improvements to address recent collisions	TBD
WSDOT-03	Intersection	SR 20 / Libbey Road	Install intersection improvements / roadway curvature enhancements to address recent fatal collision	TBD

In addition to the capital improvement programs, the County also has Maintenance and Operations costs related to overseeing and operating existing transportation assets. They generally include the normal cost of maintaining and preserving existing roadways and other transportation infrastructure, as well as the cost of administering transportation programs in the County. The costs associated with maintenance and operations are discussed in Chapter 5.

Figure 4-6 Transportation Improvement Projects (North Whidbey)

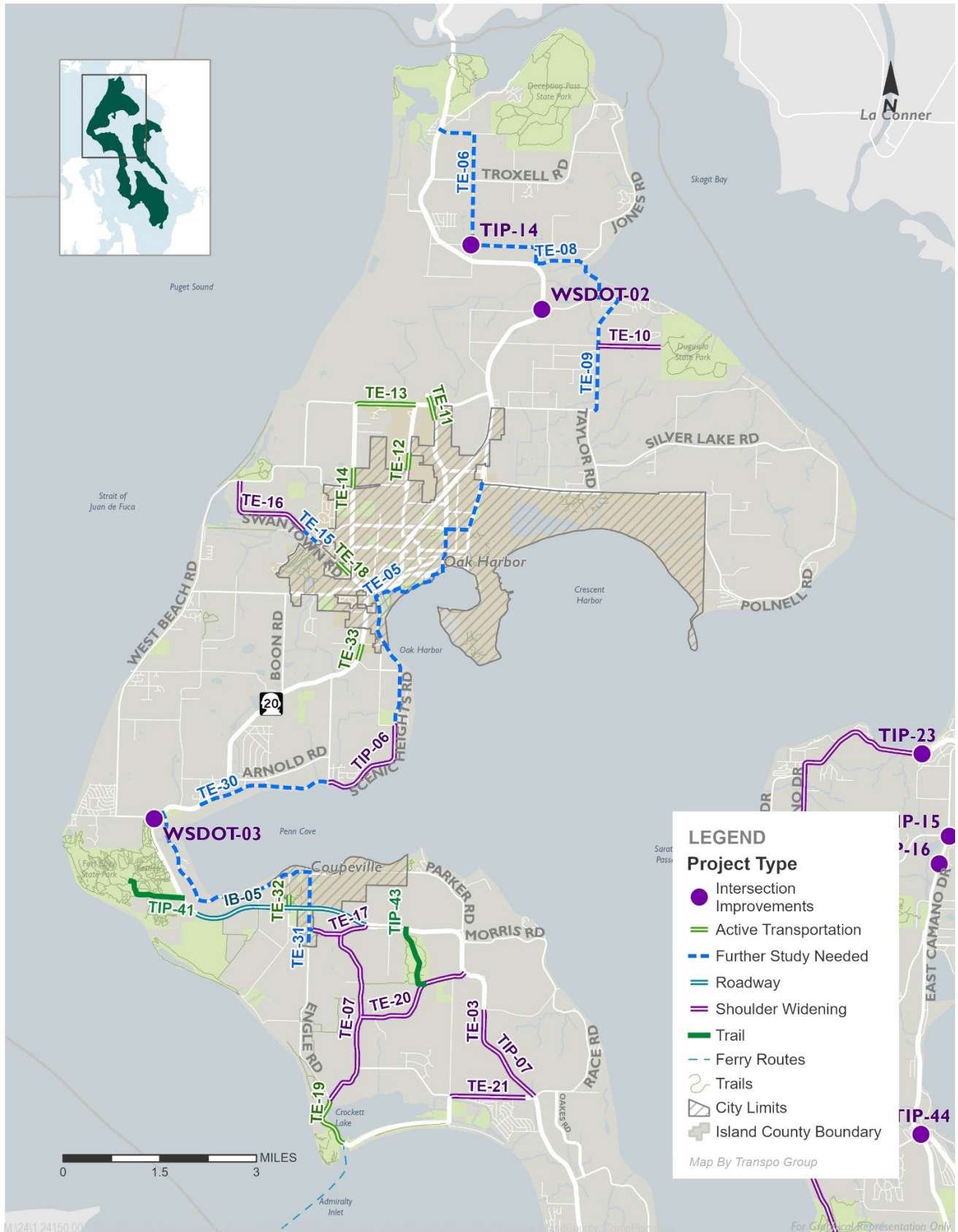


Figure 4-7 Transportation Improvement Projects (South Whidbey)

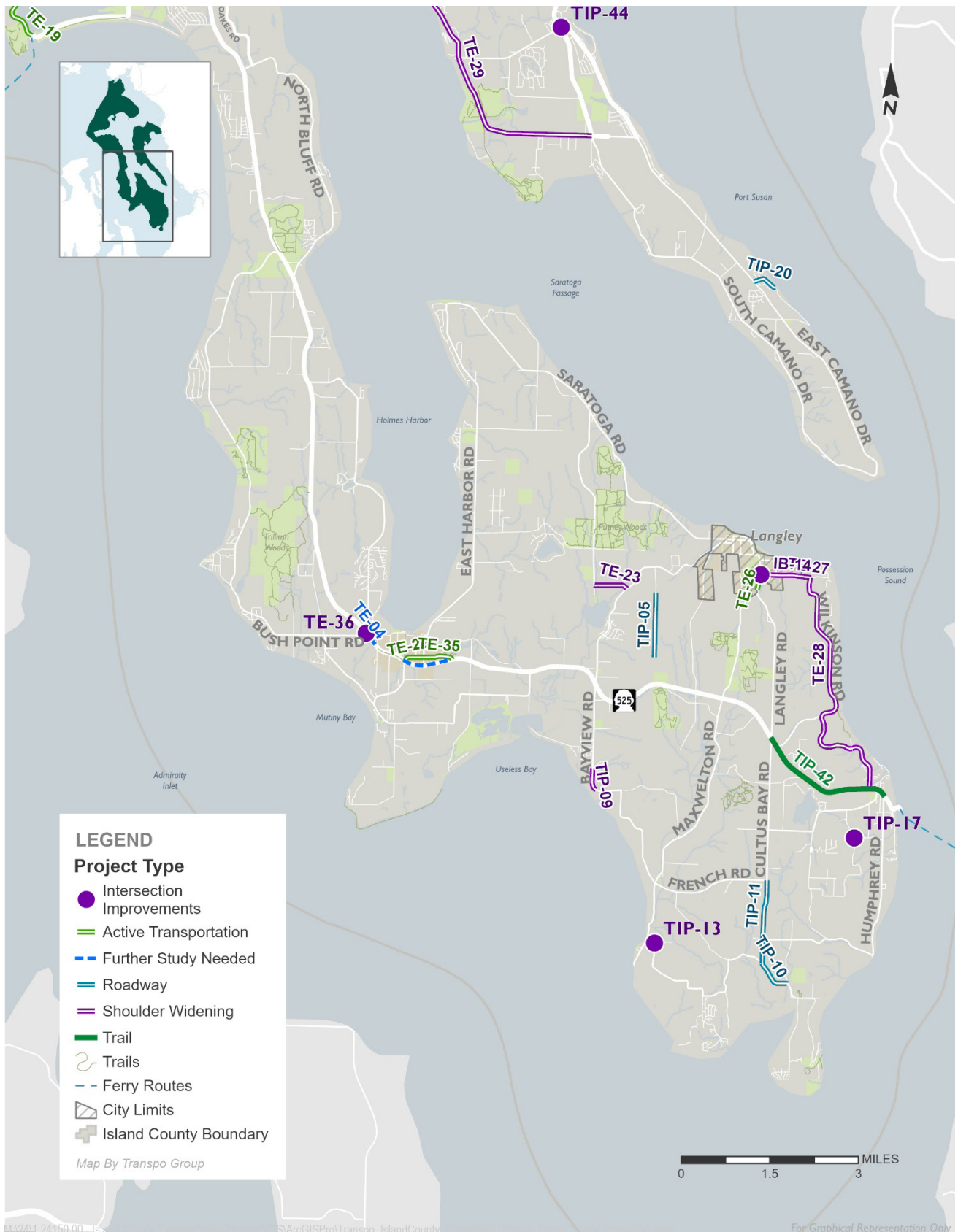


Figure 4-8 Transportation Improvement Projects (Camano)



5 TRANSPORTATION FUNDING SITUATION ASSESSMENT

The list of transportation improvement projects must be funded and implemented to meet existing and future travel demands in and around Island County. Estimated project costs and future revenues are presented and options to fund the projects are described in this section. Implementation strategies are discussed and include items such as coordination with WSDOT, IRTPO, and local agencies to prioritize and fund regional improvements. The implementation plan sets up the framework for the County to prioritize and fund the improvements identified in the transportation plan.

The GMA requires the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan to include a multi-year financing plan based on the identified improvement needs in the transportation systems plan. The financing plan is to be the basis in developing the required six-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). If probable funding is less than the identified needs, then the transportation financing program must also include a discussion of how additional funding will be raised or how land use assumptions will be reassessed to assure that level of service standards will be met. Alternatively, the County can adjust its level of service standards.

A summary of costs for capital improvement projects and countywide maintenance and operation programs are presented. The capital project and maintenance and operations program costs are compared to estimated revenues from existing sources used by the County to fund transportation improvements. Other potential funding sources to help reduce the projected shortfall are described. Lastly, a summary of a reassessment strategy for the county to use for reviewing transportation funding in the context of the overall Comprehensive Plan is also included.

5.1 Project and Programs Cost Estimates

Table 5-1 summarizes the costs of the recommended transportation improvement projects and programs. These cover Island County capital improvements, maintenance and operations. The costs are summarized for the life of the Plan. Improvements under the responsibility of WSDOT and local agencies are not included in the summary table. However, the County may choose to include a share of the costs of WSDOT improvements in its transportation impact fee or other funding options.

Table 5-1 Transportation Project and Program Costs (2026 – 2045)

Improvement Type	(2026-2045) Total Costs ¹	Percent of Total Costs
Transportation Capital Projects²		
Shoulder Widening Program	\$84,350,000	53.6%
Intersection Improvements	\$19,140,000	12.2%
Roadway Improvements	\$20,744,000	13.2%
Trail System Expansion	\$2,805,000	1.8%
Active Transportation Improvements	\$15,833,000	10.1%
Countywide Spot Improvements	\$14,605,000	9.3%
Subtotal Capital Projects	\$157,477,000	100%

Improvement Type	(2026-2045) Total Costs ¹	Percent of Total Costs
Transportation Maintenance & Operations (M & O) Programs		
Salaries	\$61,350,000	22%
Maintenance & Operations	\$218,560,000	78%
Subtotal M & O Programs	\$279,910,000	100%
Total Costs	\$437,387,000	

¹ All costs in 2025 dollars, rounded to \$1,000

² Does not include other agency improvements

Planning-level cost estimates were developed for the capital improvements and presented in the Transportation System Plan Chapter (4). The planning estimates were prepared based upon average unit costs for transportation projects within the region. Planning-level costs were developed with the assumption that costs would include associated storm water development requirements, property acquisition, wetland mitigation, and utility extensions and/or upgrades, based upon historic costs for those items. More detailed cost estimates will need to be prepared as the projects are closer to design and construction. Future design studies will identify specific property impacts and options to reduce costs and impacts on properties.

The estimated capital cost of the Transportation Plan is approximately \$437.4 million (in 2025 dollars). Approximately 54 percent of the capital costs are associated with the shoulder widening program. These costs cover upgrading roadways to provide 4-foot-wide shoulders across the planned active transportation network. 25 percent of the capital costs are associated with roadway and intersection improvements, 19 percent with construction of active transportation improvements (sidewalks, bike lanes and multiuse paths) and expansion of the trail network. The remaining 2 percent of capital costs are for countywide spot improvements.

Maintenance and operations costs were projected based on historic expenditures from 2018 through 2024. Maintenance and operations costs cover general administration, roadway and storm drainage maintenance, street lighting, traffic signal and street signs, street sweeping, and other miscellaneous safety improvement programs. The M&O budget also includes the salaries of staff and the sheriff's department's support. To reduce the need for extensive capital reconstruction projects, the maintenance and operations program to preserve the existing street system is estimated to be nearly \$280 million of the total \$437.4 million Transportation Plan cost.

5.2 Funding Analysis with Existing Revenue Sources

Historically there are seven main sources of revenue that have been used to fund transportation projects in Island County:

- Federal Funding Sources
 1. Federal Entitlements and Grants
- State Funding Sources
 2. State Fuel Tax
 3. CAPRON Funds
 4. State Entitlements and Grants
- Local Funding
 5. Property Taxes

6. County General Fund Transfers
7. Local Entitlements and Grants

Federal Funding Sources

Federal Entitlements and Grants

Federal transportation grants are funded through the federal portion of the Fuel Excise Tax. The federal gas tax rate has remained consistent since 1993 at approximately \$0.184 per gallon.

Most of these funds are deposited into the Highway Trust Fund and disbursed to the states through the Highway and Mass Transit Accounts. The Federal share of funding has represented a relatively small portion of overall funding and is sporadic and generally tied to success in grant applications for specific projects.

Additionally, Island County receives some non-grant federal transportation funding through federal entitlements that are part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). The IIJA program is a federal program that has funded surface transportation programs at over \$350 billion for federal highway programs for fiscal years 2022 through 2026.

State Funding Sources

State Motor Vehicle Fuel Tax (MVFT/Gas Tax)

Although historical per capita fuel tax dollars have been increasing in nominal numbers, when adjusted for inflation it is clear that per capita revenues have been declining over time. This trend is becoming more pronounced in very recent history due to large increases in the price of gasoline and a significant shift toward electric-powered and more fuel-efficient vehicles. On average, Island County has received 11% of its revenues from their share of overall county distributions of the State Motor Vehicle Fuel Tax. This category has been the County's third largest source of revenue for Transportation.

CAPRON Funds

Island County receives a sizable Capron refund distribution of State Motor Vehicle Fuel Tax. The Capron refund is authorized by the Capron Act, which was originally made law in 1919 (and is now codified as RCW 46.68.080) as a means to ensure equitable distribution of the State portion of MVFT revenues by refunding State MVFT proceeds collected within counties comprised entirely of Islands. At the time, San Juan and Island Counties were the only counties wholly comprised of islands and without any state highways. When State Route 20 was extended to Whidbey Island, the Capron refund was adjusted by reducing the refund to 50% of MVFT collected in the county.

Currently, the Capron Act distributes one-half of the vehicle license fees collected under RCW 46.17.350 and 46.17.355 and one-half of the fuel taxes collected under RCW 82.36.025 (1) and 82.38.030 (1) and directly or indirectly paid by the residents of those counties composed entirely of islands and which have either a fixed physical connection with the mainland or state highways on any of the islands of which they are composed, to those counties to fund their transportation programs.

Historically, about 27.5% of Island County's transportation revenues have come from Capron Refund distributions. This category is the County's second largest source of revenue for Transportation. This is a unique funding source that is extremely beneficial to Island County in funding its transportation program, including both M&O and capital improvements.

Over the past several decades there have been many attempts in the state legislature to repeal the Capron Act. So far, all attempts have failed. It is likely that in the future the act will

be subject to attempted repeal again. In addition, this source suffers from the same overall uncertainty surrounding the continued viability of Motor Fuel Tax, so there is particular risk for Island County in terms of maintaining traditional levels of transportation funding.

Other State Funds

This category is primarily state grants, like those from the Department of Ecology, Urban Arterial Board, Transportation Improvement Board, Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development, and the Washington State Department of Transportation. Beyond State grants, state shared revenues, entitlements, impact payments, and in-lieu taxes might be included in this revenue category.

Local Funding Sources

Property Taxes (Road Levy)

Property Taxes are used by the County and Cities to partially fund transportation projects. The County has a dedicated road levy. The local Cities and Towns use property tax receipts for a range of programs, including transportation. The Road Levy is a property tax collected by the County specifically for transportation funding and accounts for the largest portion (up to 48%) of the County’s transportation funds.

General Fund Transfers

Because general fund revenues have few restrictions on how they are spent and the fact that the County has a dedicated Road Levy for transportation, it is relatively unusual for these funds to be used for transportation purposes. Historically the County’s General Fund contributions to transportation have been sporadic.

Other Local Funding

These dollars typically include some combination of Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) funds, Leasehold Excise Taxes, Road Permits, payments in lieu of taxes, and other miscellaneous capital and transportation funds. This has been a relatively steady source of funding, though overall contributing a relatively small share of total revenues for transportation investments.

Grants

Over the past several years the County has had some success in securing grants for transportation improvements. Grant funding is typically tied to specific improvement projects and distributed on a competitive basis, often with a local funding match.

Table 5-2 summarizes the anticipated transportation revenues for the 20-year plan lifecycle.

Revenue Source	Total Revenues	Percent of Total Revenues
Road Levy Tax	\$188,000,000	48.70%
Capron	\$106,000,000	27.46%
State Entitlement	\$44,000,000	11.40%
Grants (State and Federal)	\$34,000,000	8.81%
Other	\$14,000,000	3.63%
Total Revenues	\$386,000,000	100.0%

Revenue projections were estimated based upon 7-years of historical revenues (2018-2024). Based on recent historical data, it is estimated that revenues would be more than \$386 million during the 20-year period.

TBD revenues are assumed to generate approximately 48.7 percent of revenue, while Capron funding is expected to generate 27 percent of the revenue.

5.3 Forecasted Revenue Shortfall

Table 5-3 summarizes the County’s proposed transportation financing strategy for the approximately \$280 million cost of maintaining and operating the County’s roadways as well as the \$157.5 million in capital costs. The Plan results in a shortfall of approximately \$51.4 million. This assumes that the level of grants and developer commitments will be generated as estimated in the Transportation Plan. The deficit could be greater if the level of development or the level of grant funding is less than forecast. The former would be offset by a reduced need for transportation improvements to accommodate growth. If the County is more successful in obtaining grants or other outside funding for projects, then the potential deficit could be reduced, as discussed in the next section.

Table 5-3 Forecasted Revenues and Costs (2026-2045)

Revenue Source ¹	Total
Transportation Revenues	\$386,000,000
Transportation M&O Costs	\$279,910,000
Estimated Capital Budget	\$106,090,000
Estimated Capital Costs	\$157,477,000
Estimated Capital Shortfall	(\$51,387,000)

¹ All revenues in 2025 dollars

² Does not include other agency improvements

Capital Revenue Shortfall

The County pools both capital and maintenance funds in the County’s roadway fund (Fund 101). The county plans to prioritize the maintenance of the roadway system before additional capital projects are constructed. Therefore, the county revenue projection assumes approximately.

\$106.1 million available (after necessary maintenance) for capital projects over the next twenty years. This results in an approximate \$51.4 million shortfall in funding to fund all of the identified capital improvement projects during the planning period.

5.4 Potential Options to Balance the Plan

As noted above, projected existing revenue sources would allow the County to fund approximately 67 percent of the identified transportation improvement project costs. The County could address this shortfall in two ways:

1. **Prioritizing Capital Projects.** The County can prioritize its capital projects, such that projects are funded on an as-funds-are-available basis. This would result in a delay in implementation of some projects, especially lower priority improvements.
2. **Adopting New Policies to Generate Additional Revenue.** The County could increase funding for capital transportation projects through several policy changes that would generate additional transportation revenues. These include partnering with other agencies or additional grants.

Prioritizing Capital Projects

Some of the capital improvements may only become necessary when and if development occurs. These projects are somewhat unique in that the cause and effect of capital projects is directly linked to the individual development projects themselves, as compared to capital projects that become necessary due to aggregate growth within the County as a whole. Funding for these projects could be tied to developer mitigations/or other County revenues generated through increased sales taxes.

The County may choose to prioritize its project list, and fund and pursue additional revenues only for the highest priority projects.

New Policies to Generate Additional Revenues

There are several new policies that Island County could consider to generate additional revenues for transportation:

- Property Tax Levy Lid Lifts
- Transportation Benefit Districts
- Voter Approved Bond/Tax Package
- Other Developer Mitigation and Requirements
- Local Improvement Districts

It is possible that some of these policies may be less feasible than others based on Island County's unique position and limited anticipated growth. That should be considered when considering any of these new policies. Each of these policies is discussed below.

Property Tax Levy Lid Lifts

The Road Levy is a property tax collected by the County specifically for transportation funding and accounts for a large portion of the County's transportation funds. Since the passage of I-747, the revenues from this levy have been declining because the 1.0 percent allowed increase does not keep pace with inflation (which hovers around 3.0 percent), or population growth.

One tool that counties can, and increasingly are, using to combat this is a levy lid lift. To do this, a county asks its voters to "lift" the 1 percent levy limit on annual levy increases so the district can collect a higher levy amount, up to the maximum rate limit amount for that jurisdiction.

Districts have certain statutory maximum rates but many of these districts have seen their levy rate reduced year after year to avoid levying more than 1 percent additional revenue as property valuations increase. A levy lid lift lets them increase rates up to the statutory maximum rate.

This is a powerful funding tool but does pose the challenge of requiring voter authorization. There is prevailing sentiment, though, that barring the legislature redesigning the current levy caps, jurisdictions will be forced to employ levy lid lifts to collect revenues lost from the 1 percent levy cap.

Transportation Benefit Districts

Transportation Benefit Districts (TBDs) (Chapter 36.73 RCW) are independent taxing districts that can impose fees and/or taxes to fund transportation improvements. TBDs can be established via ordinance in jurisdictions ranging from a city to multi-county area. TBDs are intended to finance the construction of, and operate, improvements to roadways, high-capacity transportation systems, public transit systems, and other transportation management programs.

- **Sales and Use Tax (RCW 82.14.0455).** Cities and counties can authorize local TBDs that provide up to a 0.2% local sales and use tax with voter approval. This tax must be authorized by voters and may not be in effect longer than 10 years unless reauthorized by voters.
- **Motor Vehicle Excise Tax (MVET) (RCWs 81.100 and 81.104).** TBDs can levy up to a \$100 fee for each new vehicle weighing less than 6,000 pounds registered in its jurisdiction. \$20 of this fee can be leveraged without a public vote.

Currently, Island County has not established a TBD, and, therefore, does not collect any revenue via this mechanism. To generate transportation revenues via a TBD, Island County would first need to pass a County ordinance establishing the TBD and then impose a fee or tax (from the options above) on that TBD. Depending on the fee or tax levied in the TBD, Island County might have to hold a public election to levy the tax.

Voter Approved Bond/Tax Package

Bonds do not result in additional revenue unless coupled with a revenue generating mechanism, such as a voter approved tax. The debt service on the bonds results in increased costs which can be paid with the additional tax revenues. Although the County does not anticipate issuing bonds in the near future, it remains an option for generating additional transportation revenues to fund some of the higher cost improvement projects.

Other Developer Mitigation and Requirements

The County could adopt specific development-related requirements which would help fund the identified improvements. These include frontage improvements and mitigation under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and concurrency requirements. The County requires developments to fund and construct certain roadway improvements as part of their projects.

These typically include reconstructing abutting roads to meet the County's current design standards. These improvements can include widening of pavement, drainage improvements, and construction of curb, gutter, and sidewalks.

The County has the authority to evaluate impacts of development projects under SEPA. The SEPA review may identify adverse transportation impacts. These could include impacts related to safety, traffic operations, non-motorized travel, or other transportation issues. The needed improvements may or may not be identified as specific projects in the Plan.

The County could also require an evaluation of transportation concurrency for development projects. The concurrency evaluation may identify impacts to facilities that operate below the County's level of service standard. To resolve that deficiency, the applicant can propose to fund and/or construct improvements to provide an adequate level of service. Alternatively, the applicant can wait for the County, or another agency or developer to fund improvements to resolve the deficiency. Again, this funding source, while common in Washington State, may not be viable for Island County since growth projections do not appear to require capacity increases in the system.

Local Improvement Districts

A local improvement district (LID) (RCW 35.43 to 35.56) is a special assessment area established by a jurisdiction to fund specific public improvements, including transportation improvements, through mechanisms that assess those costs to benefitted property owners. LIDs could be formed to construct sidewalks, upgrade streets, improve drainage, or other similar types of projects. A LID may be in residential, commercial, or industrial areas or combinations depending on the needs and benefits. LIDs can be proposed either by the County or by residents or business/property owners. LIDs must be formed by a specific process which establishes the improvements, their costs, and assessments. The assessments are added to the property tax which helps to spread the costs over time. The amount of money you can generate through an LID has to be equal to or less than the special benefit generated by the project for the properties being assessed. Due to that funding limiter, this tool works only in certain situations and for certain projects, but if the right opportunity presents itself, it could be a useful tool. Many of these situations hinge on development, so it is unlikely that it will be a large funding source for Island County moving forward.

5.5 Intergovernmental Coordination

Regional transportation planning was significantly affected by the adoption of the Growth Management Act in 1990. One of GMA's provisions authorized establishment of Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs). In 1991, Skagit County jurisdictions joined with Island County jurisdictions to form the Skagit-Island Regional Transportation Planning Organization (SIRTPO). The SIRTPO existed from 1991 – 2015, until it was dissolved because it no longer met the member requirements for an RTPO. Upon its dissolution, SCOG became the RTPO for Skagit County and the Island RTPO, or IRTPO, was formed in September 2016.

Island RTPO (IRTPO) is the lead agency for coordinating the transportation planning efforts of jurisdictions within the county. The organization is responsible for maintaining a regional transportation plan that frames the policy basis for coordinating transportation planning and improvements within Island County, including County, city and town, ports, Indian tribes, WSDOT, and public transportation service providers. IRTPO maintains the regional travel demand forecasting model and facilitates discussion and decision-making among its member agencies, including:

- Island County
- City of Oak Harbor
- Town of Coupeville
- City of Langley
- Port of Coupeville
- Island Transit
- Port of South Whidbey
- Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)

Northwest Region Office Naval Air Station Whidbey Island (NASWI) and the City of Stanwood are associate members. As part of WSDOT, the Washington State Ferry (WSF) system also sends representatives to IRTPO meetings. The member organizations voluntarily participate in the IRTPO and have elected Island County as the lead agency and fiscal agent. The IRTPO operates on State and Federal grant funding. No dues are collected from member agencies.

The 13.5% matching funds required by any of the Federal grants the IRTPO receives are divided amongst the project-specific agencies. No matching funds are required for the IRTPO's State grants.

Regional Transportation Plan

The IRTPO regional transportation plan Island Access 2045 is based on public and agency outreach and establishes four key pillars with supporting policies, as listed below.

PILLAR 1 – LEADERSHIP

Refers to actions that establish a shared vision or common goal, motivate others to pursue that direction, foster collaboration and innovation, and advance regional objectives.

Policy 1. Consistency & Coordination Policy 2. Strategic Decisions

Policy 3. Public Accountability Policy 4. Visionary Direction

PILLAR 2 - SYSTEM MANAGEMENT

Refers to those strategies and actions that keep all aspects of the multimodal transportation system working safely and efficiently, and which keep life cycle costs as low as possible.

Policy 5. State of Good Repair Policy 6. Efficient Reliability Policy 7. System Safety

PILLAR 3 - SUSTAINABILITY

Refers to those actions that support the triple-bottom line of social equity, environmental health, and economic vitality.

Policy 8. Environmental Health Policy 9. Economic Vitality Policy 10. Social Equity

PILLAR 4 - PREPAREDNESS

Refers to actions that increase the ability to respond and adapt to unexpected disruptions or harness emerging opportunities.

Policy 11. System Resiliency Policy 12. Technology & Innovation

Transportation Demand Management

Beyond the GMA requirements to forecast how physical transportation facilities may be capable of accommodating the transportation demands attributed to future growth, Island County and other jurisdictions are responsible for identifying possible optional means such as management of transportation services in creative ways that maximize efficiencies and leverage the capacities of existing transportation facilities.

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) includes an entire set of measures and strategies that can be employed to manage the demand, rather than the supply, side of the societal transportation equation. TDM strategies include increased use of active transportation travel, transit and car-pooling, working from home, coordination of land use and transportation decisions, and encouraging major trip generators to plan their activities in such a way that peak hour travel demands are minimized.

5.6 Reassessment Strategy

Although the financing summary identifies the potential for a total, conservative revenue shortfall of approximately \$51.4 M (in 2025 dollars) over the life of the plan, the County is committed to reassessing their transportation needs and funding sources each year as part of its 6-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). This allows the County to match the financing program with the short-term improvement projects and funding. To implement the Transportation Element, the County will consider the following principals in its transportation funding program:

New Policies to Generate Additional Revenues

There are several new policies that Island County could consider generating additional revenues for transportation:

- Balance capital improvement with available revenues, by prioritizing transportation capital improvement projects as part of the annual 6-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP);
- Consider new policies to generate additional revenues; these may include:
 - Property Tax Levy Lid Lifts
 - Transportation Benefit Districts
 - Voter Approved Bond/Tax Package
 - Other Developer Mitigation and Requirements
 - Local Improvement Districts;
- Review project design standards to determine whether costs could be reduced through reasonable changes in scope or deviations from design standards; and
- Continue to vigorously pursue grant funds from state and federal sources, understanding that grant funds are anticipated to decline.

The County will use the annual update of the 6-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to re-evaluate priorities and timing of projects and need for alternative funding programs.

Throughout the planning period, projects will be completed and priorities revised. The development of the TIP will be an ongoing process over the life of the Plan and will be reviewed and amended annually.

CAPITAL FACILITIES AND UTILITIES



Island County Comprehensive Plan

2025 Periodic Update

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CAPITAL FACILITIES AND UTILITIES

10.1 INTRODUCTION

In the 2025 Comprehensive Plan update, Island County chose to combine the Capital Facilities and Utilities Elements to demonstrate how closely the two elements relate and create a shared responsibility between County service providers and non-County service providers. This shared duty allows the County to create well-coordinated and proactive planning measures that address current and future facility, utility, and service needs.

The Capital Facilities and Utilities elements are both required under Washington’s Growth Management Act (GMA). Each element has a unique purpose and set of requirements, however, there are many similarities in ways that make addressing them together particularly valuable in ensuring sufficient facilities and utilities are planned to address population growth for the County.

GMA Requirements for the Capital Facilities Element (CFE) (RCW 36.70A.070(3)):

- A. An inventory of existing facilities owned by public entities, including green infrastructure, showing their locations and capacities;
- B. A forecast of the future needs;
- 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. Reassessment of 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 with the Capital Facilities Plan Element are coordinated and consistent. Parks and recreation facilities shall be included in the Capital Facilities Element.

GMA Requirements for the Utilities Element (RCW 36.70A.070(4)):

- A. Include the general location, proposed location, and capacity of all existing and proposed utilities including, but not limited to, electrical, telecommunications, and natural gas systems.
- B. The county or city shall identify all public entities that own utility systems and endeavor in good faith to work with other public entities, such as special purpose districts, to gather and include within its utilities element the information required in (a) of this subsection. However, if, after a good faith effort, the county or city is unable to gather the information required in (a) of this subsection from the other public entities, the failure to include such information in the utilities element shall not be grounds for a finding of noncompliance or invalidity under chapter 228, Laws of 2023. A good faith effort must, at a minimum, include consulting the public entity’s capital facility or system plans, and emailing and calling the staff of the public entity.

10.1.1 Background

Capital Facilities and Utilities goals and policies in this comprehensive plan are an integral part of other elements, including Land Use, Housing, Climate Resiliency, Economic Development, Natural Resources, Parks, and Transportation. Public services and facilities include, but are not limited to, parks and recreation, law enforcement, fire protection, emergency preparedness, water/sewer, roads, transit, walk and bike facilities, ferries, stormwater management, education, library services, health and human services, energy, and telecommunications.

10.1.2 Why Plan for Capital Facilities?

Capital facilities planning has multiple benefits, including:

- *Decision Making Framework.* The Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) provides a framework for decision makers regarding what to buy, when to buy it, and how projects will be funded.
- *Link to Long Range Plans.* The CFP guides implementation of the community’s comprehensive plan, subarea plans, and strategies.
- *Project Management Tool.* The CFP provides the County an organizational mechanism to prioritize capital projects and match projects with existing funding options.
- *Community Awareness.* The adoption of a CFP elevates public awareness of the needs and financial resources available for projects.
- *Eligibility for Grants and Funding.* The State of Washington Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development’s Public Works Trust Fund requires that local governments have a CFE in order to be eligible for loans. Some other grants and loans have similar requirements or give preference to governments that have a CFE.
- *Best Management Practices.* Planning for major capital facilities and their costs requires Island County to demonstrate the need for facilities and the need for revenues to pay for them; estimate eventual operation and maintenance costs of new capital facilities that will impact the annual budget; take advantage of sources of revenue that require a CFE in order to qualify for the revenue; and get better ratings on bond issues when the County borrows money for capital facilities (thus reducing interest rates and the cost of borrowing money).

Exhibit 1. Providers by Facility Type.

Capital Facility/Service	Primary Department/Provider	Description	Applicable Plan(s)
General Administration Buildings	Island County – Facilities Management	County-owned buildings and property management related to County-owned capital.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Island County Budget • Island County Capital Improvement Plan (updated annually)
Corrections Facilities/Law Enforcement			
Courts	Island County District Court, Superior Court, and Juvenile Court; Clerk of the Superior Court, Prosecuting Attorney’s Office	Provides facilities that support courtroom functions at all levels of the judicial system.	
Sheriff	Island County – Sheriff’s Department	Provides facilities that support the provision of law enforcement services.	
Jail/Corrections Facilities	Island County – Sheriff’s Department (Jail)/Superior Court (Juvenile Detention Center)	Jail services can include the provision of prosecution, adjudication, indigent defense, sentencing, and incarceration services for misdemeanor and gross misdemeanor offenses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jail Feasibility Study (2025)

Capital Facility/ Service	Primary Department/ Provider	Description	Applicable Plan(s)
Emergency Management			
Emergency Management	Island County – Department of Emergency Management	Supports the community and partners by preparing for, responding to, mitigating against, and facilitating recovery from all emergencies and disasters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Island County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (2020) Island County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (2018)
Fire Protection/ Emergency Medical Services	Fire Districts, Whidbey Health Public Hospital District, NASWI	Provides fire suppression and EMS, including technical and special operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fire District Strategic & Facility Plans
Transportation	<i>See the Transportation Element for more detail on transportation facilities.</i>		
County Roads	Island County – Public Works, Island Regional Transportation Planning Organization (IRTPO)	Provides County roads throughout the County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Island County Transportation Improvement Plan (updated annually) IRTPO Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) (2023) Island County Regional Transportation Plan (2024) Comprehensive Safety Action Plan (2025)
Active Transportation	Island County – Public Works, IRTPO	Provides planning framework and resources for non-motorized and human powered forms of transportation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Island County Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) (adopted annually) RTIP (2023) Island County Non-Motorized Trails Plan (2018)
State Highways	Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), IRTPO	Provides highways throughout the County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Transportation Plan (2024) RTIP (2023)
Ferries	WSDOT	Provides effective and efficient ferry services between Clinton – Mukilteo and Coupeville – Port Townsend.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WA State Ferries Long Range Plan (2020 – 2040)
Transit	Island Transit	Provides safe, efficient, and effective transportation for residents and visitors of Island County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Six Year Transit Development Plan (adopted annually)
Health and Human Services	Island County Public Health and Human Services Departments	Provides a variety of health and human services to the residents of the County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Health Improvement Plan (2024)

Capital Facility/ Service	Primary Department/ Provider	Description	Applicable Plan(s)
Libraries	Sno-Isle Libraries	Provides access to books, movies, music, and other community services like free wireless internet and community meeting space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sno-Isle Libraries Budget
Water	Community Water Systems, Water Districts, Cities	Infrastructure for providing potable water and water for fire suppression to county residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinated Water System Plan (1990) Water Resource Management Plan (1992) Groundwater Management Plan (2005)
Parks & Recreation (see also the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element)	Island County, Cities and Town, North Whidbey Parks District, South Whidbey Parks District, Washington State Parks, and more.	Parks, trails, and recreation facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parks, Recreation, and Outdoor Space Element Individual Parks District Plans
Sanitary Sewer	Island County, Sewer Districts, Cities	Domestic and commercial wastewater systems using a combination of municipal systems and onsite wastewater disposal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual District Sewer Plans
Schools	School Districts, Skagit Valley College, Washington State University (WSU) Extension	School districts provide public education from kindergarten through grade 12; WSU Extension provides research based information and educational programs to the community; Skagit Valley College is a community college offering a variety of courses and programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School District Strategic or Improvement Plans
Solid Waste Management	Island County – Public Works	Solid waste disposal, prevention, and recycling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solid Waste and Moderate Risk Waste Management Plan (2020)
Stormwater Management	Island County, Cities	Manages water quality and flood risks to reduce flooding, improve water quality, and preserve natural resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stormwater Design Manual Drainage District Plans Surface Water Improvement Program

Capital Facility/ Service	Primary Department/ Provider	Description	Applicable Plan(s)
Private Utilities not included in the Capital Facilities Plan			
Telecommunications	Service Providers	Services include telephone, cable, personal wireless communication, and broadband internet.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Island County Broadband Action Plan (2023) Washington State BEAD 5-year Action Plan Service Provider Individual Plans Washington State Digital Equity Plan
Energy	Puget Sound Energy (PSE), Sno-PUD	Provides electric power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PSE Integrated Resource Plan (2023) Sno-PUD Integrated Resource Plan (2023)
Natural Gas	Cascade Natural Gas Corporation, Service Providers	Provides natural gas, predominantly in the Oak Harbor area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cascade Natural Gas' Washington Integrated Resource Plan (2025)

10.2 LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS) METHOD FOR ANALYZING CAPITAL FACILITIES

10.2.1 Explanation of LOS

Level of Service (LOS) are usually quantifiable measures of the capacity of capital facilities. LOS may also measure the quality of some capital facilities. LOS should be set to reflect realistic expectations consistent with the achievement of growth aims. Setting such levels too high, such as requiring 100 acres of parks per every resident, could be unrealistic and costly. Setting levels too low, such as only needing to have a solid waste transfer station process a pound of waste per 10,000 residents per day, when in reality each resident is producing much more than that, could result in inadequate facilities. LOS Standards are generally an established minimum capacity for capital facilities or services that is planned to be provided per unit demand or other appropriate measure of need and is used as a gauge for measuring the quantity of service.

LOS is not the exclusive determinant for capital improvement needs. Repair, remodeling, renovation, and replacement of obsolete or worn out facilities as determined by the Board of Island County Commissioners (Board), or the construction of capital facilities in excess of the minimum LOS Standards adopted in this Element, may be constructed or acquired at any time as long as the following conditions are met:

1. The capital improvement does not make financially infeasible any other capital improvement that is needed to achieve or maintain the LOS Standards adopted in this Element, and
2. The capital improvement does not contradict, limit, or substantially change the goals and policies of any Element of this Comprehensive Plan, and one of the following conditions is met:
 - a. The excess capacity is an integral part of a capital improvement that is needed to achieve or maintain LOS Standards (i.e., the minimum capacity of a capital project is larger than the capacity required to provide the LOS).
 - b. The excess capacity provides “economies of scale” making it less expensive than a comparable amount of capacity if acquired at a later date.

- c. The asset acquired is land that is environmentally sensitive or designated by the County as necessary for conservation or recreation.
- d. The excess capacity is part of a capital project financed by general obligation bonds approved by referendum.

Any capital improvement that is needed as a result of any of the factors listed above shall be included in the regular schedule of capital improvements contained in both the Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) and the Capital Improvements Program (CIP).

The County may provide non-capital alternatives to achieve and maintain the adopted LOS Standards. Non-capital alternatives use programs, strategies, or methods other than traditional “brick and mortar” capital standards. Non-capital alternatives include, but are not limited to the following:

- Programs that reduce or eliminate the need for the capital facility.
- Programs that provide a non-capital substitute for the capital facility (e.g. electronic home monitoring or other sentencing alternatives to incarceration in traditional jail facilities).
- Programs that reduce the demand for a capital facility or the service it provides (e.g. telecommuting as an alternative to commuting to work; transit as an alternative to cars; recycling as an alternative to landfills).
- Programs that use alternative methods to provide the same LOS (e.g. “natural” drainage in managed flood basins as an alternative to levees and dikes).
- Programs that use existing facilities more efficiently to reduce the need for additional facilities (e.g. night court as an alternative to more courtrooms during the day; flextime and evening and night shifts as an alternative to additional space for government staff).

More information regarding the non-capital alternatives that may be used for each type of facility can be found in the CFP.

Concurrency is another important factor in setting LOS Standards. Currently, the County’s concurrency ordinance only includes transportation systems. Not meeting the road LOS Standards requires a moratorium on development. LOS Standards are valuable planning and budgetary tools even if concurrency is not required for that facility. The Island County Concurrency Ordinance can be found in ICC Chapter 11.04.

Because the CFE is an open public process, development of the CFE enables citizen participation in decision making and ensures accountability of public funds. Also, participation in the capital planning process helps the community understand why a project may be given priority over others and what the funding limitations are. When seen in the context of a comprehensive planning and budgetary framework, prioritization and sequencing decisions are more clearly understood.

10.2.2 Setting LOS Standards

Because the need for capital facilities is largely determined by the adopted LOS Standards, one of the primary purposes of the CFE is the selection of these standards. LOS Standards should be based on the community’s vision and values for the future. The regionally established LOS Standards for State highways and ferries are to be developed jointly with the State Department of Transportation to encourage consistency across jurisdictions. Island County, Oak Harbor, Langley, and Coupeville have established LOS Standards for their own arterial roadway systems and intersections and transit routes. By establishing LOS Standards as the basis for providing capital facilities and ensuring the adequacy of capital facilities during the division of land and building permit processes, the CFE helps maintain the quality of life in this community.

The LOS Standards are provided in detail in CFU goal 1. The adopted standards:

1. Determine the need for capital improvements projects.
2. Provide the benchmark, when required, for testing the adequacy of capital facilities for each proposed development pursuant to the concurrency requirements.

In the 2025 Comprehensive Plan update, the Board decided to remove LOS Standards for General Administration, Law Enforcement, District Court, and Superior Court due to the dynamic nature of these facilities. These facilities will continue to be maintained and upgraded as needed. Alternatives to capital projects for those facilities can be found in the CFP.

10.3 COUNTY MANDATES

10.3.1 Countywide Planning Policies (CPP)

Many capital facilities either cross jurisdictional boundaries or are used by both rural and urban citizens. The Countywide Planning Policies (CPP) establishes policies for inter-jurisdictional coordination and planning around capital facilities, including essential public facilities. CPP 3.6 includes restrictions on where certain capital facilities should be sited and which jurisdictions should be involved in the planning process. Interlocal agreements may be utilized to coordinate facilities within unincorporated urban growth areas (UGAs).

10.3.2 Non-County Capital Facilities

The CFE contains LOS Standards for certain non-County, publicly- and privately-owned facilities. By this means adequacy will be determined and ensured. Non-County providers will need to decide their relationship to the County's Element and how they intend to provide services at an acceptable LOS. During the development of this update, non-county facility and utility providers, as well as special purpose districts were contacted. Non-county providers may update their plans out of cycle with the County's comprehensive plan and should be contacted for the most up to date information.

10.3.3 Essential Public Facilities

The GMA (RCW 36.70A.200) requires that each local jurisdiction planning under the GMA provide a process within its comprehensive plan for identifying and siting essential public facilities. Essential public facilities include those facilities that are typically difficult to site, such as airports, state education facilities and state or regional transportation facilities as defined in RCW 47.06.140, regional transit authority facilities as defined in RCW 81.112.020, state and local correctional facilities, solid waste handling facilities, opioid treatment programs including both mobile and fixed-site medication units, recovery residences, harm reduction programs excluding safe injection sites, and inpatient facilities including substance use disorder treatment facilities, mental health facilities, group homes, community facilities as defined in RCW 72.05.020, and secure community transition facilities as defined in RCW 71.09.020. These facilities require special consideration and planning when selecting appropriate sites. The GMA does not directly require that Federal facilities be included when identifying essential public facilities. Federal lands are not subject to local land use regulations under GMA. The GMA prohibits local jurisdictions from imposing outright bans on essential public facilities. Goal CFU 4 and subsequent policies relate to the siting of essential public facilities. CPP 3.7 includes additional policies related to the siting of essential public facilities.

10.4 UTILITIES

10.4.1 Inventory & Analysis

The exact location of many utilities are unknown, but the GMA requires the County to include the general location of those utilities. This Element identifies existing utility systems within the County and describes improvements that are necessary to meet anticipated demand. Descriptions of these systems are supplemented with maps which illustrate the utility systems and any anticipated or proposed improvements necessary to provide adequate service to the community.

Most of the information contained in this inventory is excerpted from plans developed by the utilities themselves, as well as coordinating with the utility providers. Detailed written plans are not always available from all utilities, and some utility providers are reluctant to share information regarding existing and proposed facilities, due to security concerns.

10.4.2 Natural Gas

10.4.2.1 Cascade Natural Gas Corporation

Cascade Natural Gas Corporation (Cascade), a privately owned for-profit corporation, is the sole provider of natural gas in Island County. Cascade is a subsidiary of the Montana-Dakota Utilities Co. Washington State requires gas providers to demonstrate that existing rate payers will not subsidize new customers. Thus, gas transmission line extensions are not planned in advance, but are initiated only when there is sufficient customer demand. Cascade serves more than 272,000 customers in 96 communities, 68 of which are in Washington and 28 in Oregon.

10.4.2.1.1 Existing System

Natural gas is supplied to the County through a 6 inch high-pressure line which follows SR 532 onto Camano Island. A limited service area exists on northeastern Camano Island. A submarine 6 inch high- pressure main originates at Brown's Point on Camano Island and connects Whidbey Island at Strawberry Point. Service on Whidbey Island is limited to the City of Oak Harbor, Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, and surrounding unincorporated areas within reasonable distance of the transmission main.

10.4.2.1.2 Future Demand And Proposed Facilities

The location, capacity, and timing of any improvements to the existing Cascade distribution system are driven purely by demand. This includes installation service for new development and conversion from electricity or oil to natural gas. Also, unlike some utility providers, natural gas service may legally be refused to potential customers if the extension is not cost effective to the company.

No major new facilities, upgrades, or extension of services beyond existing service areas are planned or anticipated within the next 20 years, but Cascade is willing to serve major new development outside existing service areas if the development occurs relatively close to existing mains.

10.4.3 Electrical Utilities

Electricity is vital to any community, but the vast network of generating facilities, transmission lines, switching stations, and distribution lines are rarely given a thought until the power goes out because of a problem. Electrical service providers must coordinate and plan their activities to a much greater degree than less critical utilities. Under State law, electrical utilities must provide electricity upon demand.

Roughly 70 percent of the electricity in the Pacific Northwest comes from hydroelectric generation. Diminishing natural resources, lack of available sites for new generating stations, and growing needs pose significant regional challenges for electric utilities. Local issues involve the siting of transmission systems, substations, and distribution lines.

Possible health effects from proximity to electrical transmission facilities have concerned some members of the public. Although research is ongoing, electromagnetic fields of the type and levels found near electrical power facilities have not been conclusively demonstrated to cause adverse effects in humans. In response to these concerns, new facilities are sometimes designed or located to reduce exposure to electromagnetic fields. The Environmental Protection Agency has not adopted any standards relating to electromagnetic fields.

10.4.3.1 Snohomish County Public Utility District

Since 1949, Camano Island has been provided electrical utilities by the Snohomish County Public Utility District (SnoPUD), the second largest publicly-owned utility in the Pacific Northwest in terms of number of customers. The three elected commissioners of the district set policies and adopt rates and charges for services. The main offices of the PUD are located in Everett, with five regional offices, including one in Stanwood.

10.4.3.1.1 Existing System

The PUD's electric system covers approximately 2,200 square miles in Snohomish County and on Camano Island with a total 6,195 power line miles. There are approximately 303.44 circuit miles of power lines on Camano Island, with 203.55 overhead miles and 99.89 underground miles. Due to security concerns, Snohomish PUD has chosen not to share the location of existing utilities and proposed projects.

10.4.3.2 Puget Sound Energy

Puget Sound Energy is an investor-owned utility provider of electric and natural gas service to homes and businesses in Puget Sound. With a 6,000 square mile service territory encompassing 10 counties, PSE provides power to more than 1.2 million electric customers and 900,000 natural gas customers. PSE creates 46 percent of electricity from its own hydro, thermal, solar and wind facilities; the company has 3,500 megawatts of power-generating capacity and purchases the rest of its power supply from other utilities, independent power producers, and energy marketers across the United States and Canada. Electric and natural gas planning efforts are integrated and centered on providing safe, reliable, and efficient energy service.

10.4.3.2.1 Existing Facilities

PSE maintains an extensive integrated electric system consisting of generating plants, transmission lines, substations, switching stations, sub-systems, overhead and underground distribution systems, attachments, appurtenances, and metering systems. Electricity provided by PSE to customers is often produced elsewhere, then interconnected to the Pacific Northwest grid. For example, wind generation from the 248 MW Beaver Creek windfarm in Montana may soon power Whidbey Island. PSE serves Skagit, Island, Whatcom, and King Counties with electricity by linking transmission facilities.

The PSE transmission facilities in Island County are important components of the regional grid. Whidbey Island is electrically connected to Skagit County via two 115 kV transmission lines from March Point Substation terminating at Whidbey Switching Station (March Point-Whidbey #1 and March Point-Whidbey #2). A second pair of 115 kV transmission lines connects

Whidbey Switching Station to Greenbank Substation. Finally, three 115 kV transmission lines form a loop around the southern end of the island. Langley Substation is fed radially from the southern loop via Maxwellton Substation (Maxwelton-Langley).

The 87,000 residents of Island County are served via 38,000 upgraded AMI meters. Twelve distribution stations reach customers along the isle north to south: Crescent Harbor, Porter, Clover Valley, Hillcrest, Faber, Coupeville, Swantown, Greenbank, Freeland, Brooks Hill, Maxwellton, and Langley.

Due to its unique geographic location, Whidbey Island customers experience longer and more frequent outages in comparison to other customers on the PSE system. These storm-related outages account for a significant portion of the customer interruptions on Whidbey Island. Substation outages due to loss of transmission are also a factor and exceed the PSE System average. Outages caused by trees and vegetation account for 46 percent of the total outages on Whidbey Island, which is why vegetation management occurs on three-to-six-year cycles. Avian protection measures are also in place to safeguard wildlife.

10.4.3.2.2 Future Demand and Proposed Facilities

PSE will maintain existing energy facilities and embrace new clean energy technology in order to improve reliability and meet increasing demand on the island. A transition to electric vehicles will require increased infrastructure to ensure there is a safe, reliable, and effective source of energy for charging. Infrastructure modifications may include:

- Roadway Turn Outs for Electric First Responders to make safe aerial repairs.
- 2026 Langley Substation Replacement
- Siting Clean Energy Projects such as Solar+ Storage
- PSE Up & Go Electric
- Municipal Public Pole Charging Program
- Ferry Electrification
- Public Safety Power Shutoffs for Wildfire Prevention
- Projects from the Whidbey Solutions Report

10.4.4 Telecommunications Utilities

Telecommunication utilities can be broken down into subcategories for telephone (landline), cellular, cable television, and internet. Service providers may supply all four utilities, a mixture, or just one. The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission regulates rates and services of telephone companies operating in Washington State, but does not regulate cable, internet, wireless phones, or “voice over internet protocol” (VOIP). Island County facilitates these services through the development permitting process.

10.4.4.1 Telephone: Interlocal Exchange Carrier (ILEC)

Standard wired telephone services are becoming less common, as users are moving more to cell phones or VOIP. Two standard telephone utilities service Island County. Frontier serves all of Camano Island and northern and central portions of Whidbey Island. Whidbey Telecom existing service area begins at Greenbank and covers the southern part of Whidbey Island.

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission regulates rates and services of telephone companies operating in Washington State, but does not regulate cable, internet, wireless phones, or VOIP.

Standard telephone facilities include a central plant, which houses switching gear (often in the same building as central offices), remote switching stations, microwave and the familiar utility poles and overhead lines. Underground installation of telephone lines and use of efficient fiber optic systems is becoming more common as technology advances and the regulatory framework responds to aesthetic concerns.

10.4.4.1.1 Ziplly Fiber

Northwest Fiber LLC operates as Ziplly Fiber and is headquartered in Kirkland, Washington. Ziplly Fiber is an Incumbent Local Exchange Carrier (ILEC) providing telecommunications services in the states of Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. Northwest Fiber, LLC purchased the network assets of Frontier Communications Corporation in May 2020. Ziplly Fibers services on Island County are provided in three (3) exchange areas: Oak Harbor, Coupeville, and Stanwood/Camano Island. Within these exchange areas, Ziplly Fiber enables telecommunication services to over 36,000 end user locations. Ziplly Fiber provides voice and broadband data products for both residential and business needs. Ziplly Fiber does not require contracts, bundled services, or personal credit checks for any services. Small Business broadband data tiers are tailored to the business. Residential discounted pricing for telephone and internet services is available by qualifying under the Federal Communications Commission Lifeline program.

Residential customers are served with analog voice delivered over a copper network or digital voice delivered over via a fiber network. Subscribers can choose services from a variety of features, including call waiting, voicemail, unlimited long distance, and directory listing service, or a basic access line. Voice plans are available to all residential premises within the service areas.

Residential customers are served by copper digital subscriber line service (DSL) or fiber optic passive optical network service (Fiber). Data customers are not subject to data caps. Service availability can be found on Ziplly's website for all locations within the service area. Service tiers include 100/100 Mbps, 300/300 Mbps, 1/1 Gbps up to 50/50 Gbps for high intensity online users.

10.4.4.1.2 Whidbey Telecom

Whidbey Telecom is an independently owned and operated telephone utility serving roughly the southern half of Whidbey Island, with main offices in Freeland. In addition to telephone service, the company also provides cable television, marine communications, and access to the Internet to enable WiFi, voice, and security alarm services. Whidbey Telecom has added an extensive network of optic fiber systems to its existing wire line system. Established as Whidbey Telephone Company in 1908, the company currently employs over 100 skilled local professionals.

To ensure long-term sustainability and growth, Whidbey Telecom is actively investing (as of 2025) in its delivery capacity, primarily focusing on a Fiber-to-the-Premise network. Whidbey Telecom has significantly upgraded its core network to a 600 Gigabit per second (Gbps) capacity via an optical transport network, which connects its service area to internet connection points in Seattle and other regional locations. This high-capacity network is designed to support future growth in data usage. Whidbey Telecom currently offers home

service up to 5 Gbps and Commercial service up to 10 Gbps. Traditionally a 100 percent buried infrastructure company starting with its copper network (DSL), Whidbey Telecom continues to bury infrastructure that is critical to customer connectivity. Redundancy is critical to Whidbey Telecom's success; the company owns four fiber optic submarine cables that connect Whidbey Island to diversified internet connections. Whidbey Telecom is also capable of provisioning service aurally and via fixed wireless. The company currently delivers 99 percent uptime. The company anticipates supporting the increasing demand for high-speed internet without requiring fundamental changes to the core structure of the network.

Whidbey Telecom was awarded an NTIA grant to add Middle Mile submarine fiber optic broadband capacity from Whidbey Island, into the San Juan Islands and Point Roberts, Washington. The "Middle Mile" plan includes building out of its current terrestrial termination in Greenbank/Coupeville, north up through Oak Harbor to make the submarine connection. The company will be expanding Fiber-to-the-Premise to underserved areas of South Camano Island, via its existing submarine fiber. This work is funded by a USDA Rural Development grant awarded to Whidbey Telecom subsidiary FiberCloudNW.

10.4.4.2 Cellular Telephone Service

Cellular telephone service is the main form of communication resident's use. A cellular network consists of cells (a geographic area served by a transmitting and receiving tower), cell sites (the tower site, also including a base station radio and interconnecting equipment), a switching station (which receives and distributes signals from the cell sites via conventional land lines and microwave signals). In order to cover broad service areas, cell sites must be located close enough to one another so that service is uninterrupted as the user moves from one location to another.

Cellular towers can pose siting problems. The towers can be free-standing structures but are often placed on top of existing structures where convenient; this is more common in urban areas and creates less of a visual impact than free-standing towers. As service expands or changes, existing cell sites may need to be reconfigured.

Due to the rural nature of Island County, many areas are without adequate cellular service. This is not only a nuisance for customers but is increasingly becoming a public safety concern as few residents have landlines and rely on cell phones for emergency calls.

At the Federal level, cellular phone facilities are regulated by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), which has jurisdiction over the public airwaves, assigning frequencies and licensing operators. The FCC requires that transmitting towers be located such that transmission of signals is unobstructed. Local jurisdictions can regulate tower siting to the extent that a Federally licensed use is not impeded.

Thus, a local jurisdiction can deny approval of a tower at a particular site but cannot impose an outright ban on towers within its jurisdiction.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and WSDOT Aviation Division also review proposed towers when they exceed 200 feet in height (above ground level) or when the proposed location is within 20,000 feet of a major airport (serving military and commercial aircraft) or within 10,000 feet of a smaller airport. While not having the authority to deny potential sites, the FAA coordinates its review process with the FCC, who may deny a particular site if the FAA objects.

Identifying specific cellular companies who service Island County is difficult, since most of the cellular networks are lease or sub-leased to various companies. Instead of describing these companies individually, this Element includes a map of the existing cellular antennas which have been installed or proposed through the FCC.

10.4.4.3 Cable Television

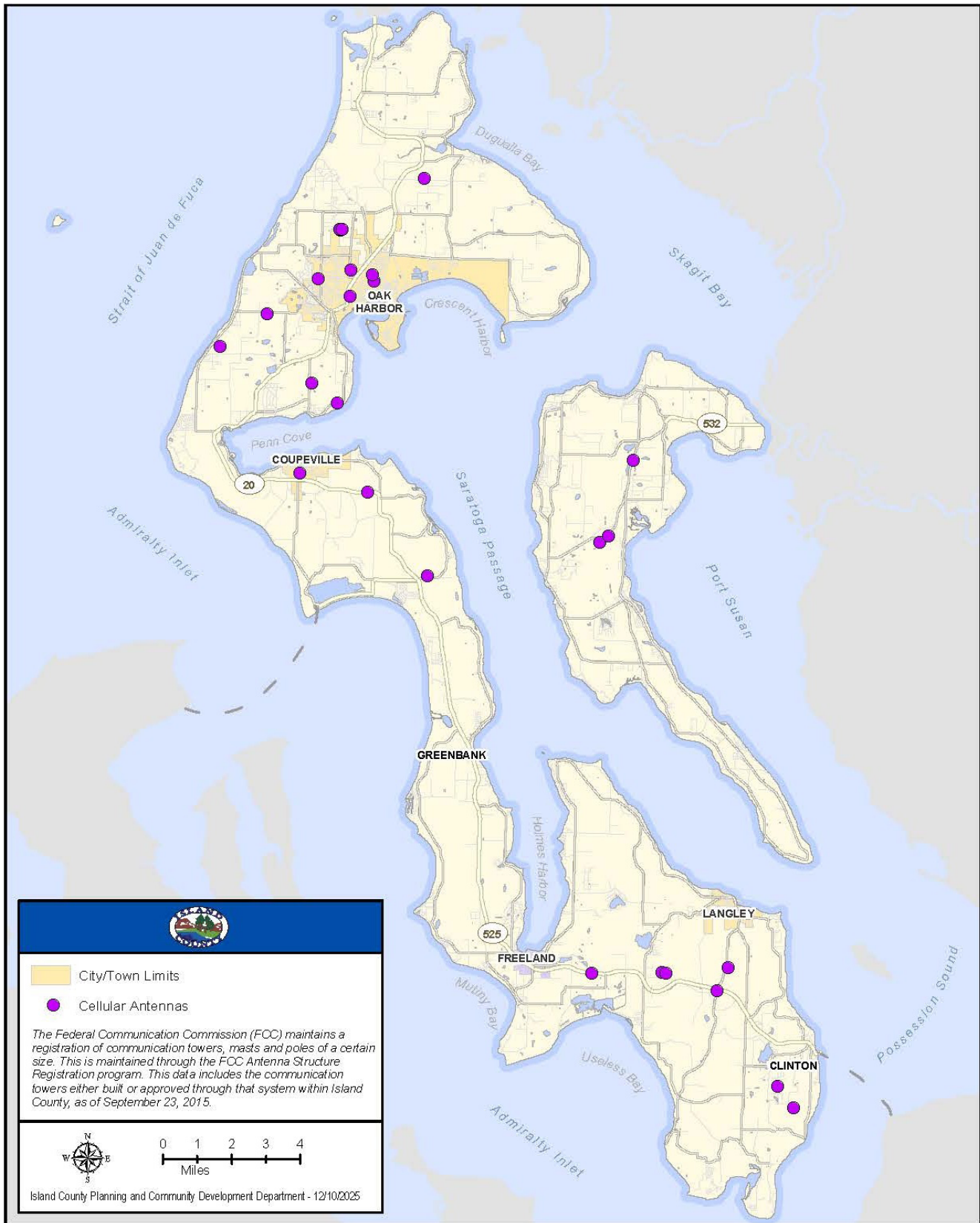
Cable carries data through coaxial cable from trunk lines, which originate at a head end site, which processes information and distributes it through the distribution system. Though the term “cable” implies wiring throughout the system, many cable systems also utilize satellite dishes and microwave antennae. Cable distribution lines are often run using leased overhead utility poles, but underground installation of cable systems is becoming more common.

Frontier, Whidbey Telecom, and Comcast are the main cable providers in Island County. Cable companies and cable service change often and require relatively minor facilities. No new major facilities are expected to meet anticipated growth in Island County.

10.4.4.4 Internet

Generally, internet service is not provided by a separate utility, but rather through a cable, telephone, or cellular provider. As such, no detailed company information is provided in this Element.

Map 1. Cellular Antennas.



10.5 GOALS AND POLICIES

Goal 1 Define types of public facilities and services, establish standards for their level of service, and determine what improvements are needed to achieve and maintain those standards.

CFU 1.1 Category A. The LOS Standards of each type of capital facility in Category A shall apply to development permits issued by the County after the effective date of implementation of this Element, as described in Chapters 11.04 and 11.05 ICC, the County's annual budget, the County's CIP, and other Elements of this Comprehensive Plan.

CFU 1.1.1 Category A Capital Facilities (County Roads – rural/urban arterials/transit routes/their intersections, as well as city/town arterials/transit routes/their intersections) can be found in the Transportation Element.

CFU 1.2 Category B. The LOS Standards of each type of capital facility in Category B shall apply to development permits issued by the County after the effective date of implementation of this Comprehensive Plan. Category B capital facilities are provided by entities other than Island County, therefore the LOS Standards shall not apply to the County's annual budget or the County's Capital Improvements Program.

CFU 1.2.1 Category B Capital Facilities (City and Town Roads – rural/urban arterials/transit routes/their intersections) can be found in the Transportation Element.

CFU 1.3 The Active Transportation Network and associated pedestrian and bicycle LOS standards are not included in the concurrency requirements for development permit review but are required to be included in the Annual Report on the Capacity and Multi-Modal LOS of Capital Facilities described in the Transportation Element.

CFU 1.4 Category C (Capital facilities owned or operated by Island County, but not subject to concurrency requirements). The LOS standards for Category C capital facilities located within unincorporated areas of the County shall be as follows (municipalities may establish different LOS standards).

CFU 1.4.1 Sanitary Sewage: Approving authority standard.

CFU 1.4.2 Solid Waste Processing: 5.96 pounds per capita per day.

CFU 1.4.3 Corrections and Detention: 1.25 beds per 1,000 total County population. Facilities should be built using a 40-year planning period.

CFU 1.4.4 Juvenile Detention: 0.0675 beds per 1,000 total County population.

CFU 1.4.5 Trails: 18.1 miles per 1,000 population in the unincorporated area.

CFU 1.4.6 Parks: 10.2 acres per 1,000 population in the unincorporated area.

CFU 1.4.7 Before the 2035 Periodic Update, develop a LOS standard for open space and natural assets (such as forests, shorelines, and freshwater systems).

CFU 1.4.8 Stormwater management systems must be designed to control both stormwater quantity and quality impacts.

CFU 1.4.8.1 Surface Water – Habitat – Both areas: Restore in-stream flows, reduce peaks, and maintain clear fish passage.

CFU 1.4.8.2 Surface Water – Quality - Both areas: Federal/State water quality standards for receiving waters.

CFU 1.4.9 Examine the County's role in requiring a level of service standard for utility franchise permits.

CFU 1.5 Category D (Capital facilities owned or operated by federal, state, or city governments, or private organizations, but not subject to concurrency). The LOS standards for Category D capital facilities located within unincorporated areas of the County shall be as follows (municipalities may establish different LOS standards).

CFU 1.5.1 Fire Protection Services: Fire Protection Class #8 (Washington State Surveying and Rating Bureau).

CFU 1.5.2 School District Facilities: The minimum acreage of the site should be five usable acres and one additional usable acre for each one hundred students or portion thereof of projected maximum enrollment plus an additional five usable acres if the school contains any grade above grade six, per WAC 392-342-020.

CFU 1.5.3 Stormwater management systems must be designed to control both stormwater quantity and quality impacts.

CFU 1.5.3.1 Surface Water – Habitat – Both areas: Restore in-stream flows, reduce peaks, and maintain clear fish passage.

CFU 1.5.3.2 Surface Water – Quality – Both Areas: Federal/State water quality standards for receiving waters.

CFU 1.5.4 Domestic Water: Refer to State Department of Health and Island County Code for proof of water availability requirements.

CFU 1.5.5 Regional Facilities: As adopted by Island Regional Transportation Planning Organization (IRTP) in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

CFU 1.5.6 State-wide Facilities: As adopted by WSDOT/Legislature.

CFU 1.5.7 Washington State Ferries: As adopted by WSDOT/Legislature.

Goal 2

Ensure the costs of County-owned capital facilities are within the County's funding capacity, and fairly distributed between users and the County.

CFU 2.1 Financial Feasibility. The estimated costs of all needed capital improvements shall not exceed conservative estimates of revenues from sources that are available to the County pursuant to current statutes, and which have not been rejected by referendum, if a referendum is required to enact a source of revenue.

CFU 2.2 Financing Policies. Capital improvements shall be financed, and debt shall be managed as follows:

CFU 2.2.1 Capital improvements for County enterprise funds (e.g. solid waste) shall be financed by one of the following:

CFU 2.2.1.1 Debt to be repaid by user fees and charges and connection or capacity fees for enterprise services.

CFU 2.2.1.2 Current assets (e.g. reserves, equity or surpluses, and current revenue, including grants, loans, donations and interlocal agreements).

CFU 2.2.1.3 A combination of debt and current assets.

CFU 2.2.2 Capital improvements financed by non-enterprise funds shall be financed from either current assets: (i.e., current revenue, fund equity and reserves), or debt, or a combination thereof. Financing decisions shall include consideration for which funding source (current assets, debt, or both) will be most cost effective, consistent with prudent asset and liability management, appropriate to the useful life of the project to be financed, and the most efficient use of the County's ability to borrow funds.

CFU 2.2.3 Debt financing shall not be used to provide more capacity than is needed within the schedule of capital improvements for non-enterprise capital facilities. For REET 1 and Conservation Futures Funds, the total 6-year planning period obligations to debt service shall not exceed 50% of the total 6-year planning period revenue of the individual funds.

CFU 2.3 Operating and Maintenance Costs. Except for open space and habitat areas, the County shall not provide a capital facility, nor shall it accept the provision of a capital facility by others, if the County or other provider is unable to pay for the subsequent annual operating and maintenance costs of the facility. Non-capital alternatives, as provided in the CFP, shall be utilized to meet LOS standards if operating and maintenance cost restrictions prohibit capital construction.

CFU 2.4 Revenues Requiring Referendum (voter approval). In the event that sources of revenue require voter approval in a local referendum that has not been held, and a referendum is not held, or is held and is not successful, this Comprehensive Plan shall be revised at the next annual amendment to adjust for the lack of such revenues, in any of the following ways:

- Reduce the LOS for one or more capital facilities;
- Increase the use of other sources of revenue;
- Decrease the cost, while retaining the quantity of the facilities that is inherent in the standard for LOS;
- Decrease the demand for and subsequent use of capital facilities; or
- A combination of the above alternatives.

CFU 2.5 Conditional Permits for Projects Waiting Approved Financing. All development permits issued by the County which require capital improvements that will be financed by sources of revenue which have not been approved or implemented (such as future debt requiring a referendum) shall be conditioned on the approval or implementation of the indicated revenue sources, or the substitution of a comparable amount of revenue from existing sources.

CFU 2.6 Funding Shortage. The Land Use Element will be reassessed if probable funding falls short of meeting existing needs and to ensure that the Land Use Element, Capital Facilities Element, and financing plan within the Capital Facilities Element are coordinated and consistent.

Provide Needed Improvements and Concurrency Management

Goal 3 Provide concurrent and adequate capital facilities by constructing needed capital improvements which repair or replace obsolete or worn out facilities, eliminate existing deficiencies, and meet the needs of future development and redevelopment caused by previously issued and new development permits.

CFU 3.1 Maintain a prioritization system for possible planned capital facilities and services within the CFP.

CFU 3.2 Utilize the CFP to identify and prioritize necessary capital improvements during the annual update of the CIP.

CFU 3.3 Plan for capital facilities necessary to support development based on adopted housing and employment growth targets.

CFU 3.4 Island County will continually evaluate and seek opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of County established drainage systems and when possible, invest in additional drainage infrastructure to mitigate flooding within the County.

CFU 3.5 Follow the established requirements for concurrency as defined in WAC 365-196-840.

CFU 3.5.1 Approve development permits only when adequate capacity of facilities is reasonably available when concurrency is required per Chapters 11.04, 11.05, and 14.02A ICC.

Goal 4. Provide for the siting of essential public facilities.

CFU 4.1 Provision shall be made in the comprehensive plan and development regulations for siting important and essential public or quasi-public facilities of County or State-wide significance. Examples include, but are not limited to, airports, state education facilities, solid waste handling facilities, and public and private utilities.

CFU 4.2 Siting requirements will be important factors in determining whether essential public facilities will be located in urban or in rural areas.

CFU 4.2.1 Siting requirements for County facilities within UGAs will be jointly and cooperatively established with the municipalities.

CFU 4.3 Essential public facilities should not be located in Resource Lands and Critical Areas, as defined by Chapter 17.02B ICC, unless there is a demonstrated need, and no alternative siting options are reasonable/feasible.

CFU 4.4 Essential public facilities located outside of Urban Growth Areas should be self-contained and designed in a manner that will not promote urban sprawl. Utility and service considerations must be incorporated into site planning and development.

CFU 4.5 The siting of major energy facilities, including throughput transmission facilities, shall not be considered essential public facilities and therefore, comprehensive plans, development regulations, and local policies will apply to the siting of such facilities.

CFU 4.6 Essential public facilities shall not be sited in the Commercial Agriculture land use zone.

CFU 4.7 Essential public facilities such as schools and libraries that generate substantial travel demand should first be considered in UGAs and then, along or near major transportation corridors and public transportation routes.

CFU 4.8 Site and design public facilities with consideration of current and projected climate-related hazards, including flooding, sea level rise, and extreme weather events, to enhance community resilience, reduce long-term risks, and protect public investment.

CFU 4.9 Encourage easy to access facilities for reuse, recycling, and composting.

Goal 5 Coordinate the provision of public services, as defined in WAC 365-196-200(16), to align with emergency, health, and other relevant plans.

CFU 5.1 Implement the adopted Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. The objective is to avoid duplication, foster rapid efficient communication and insure prompt delivery of emergency services.

CFU 5.2 Promote the development of a comprehensive social and health service delivery program focusing on the identification of valid social and health needs and implementation of action programs.

CFU 5.3 Coordinate and plan for the provision of public services, and their related facilities, in the most cost effective manner incorporating both the public and private sector.

Goal 6 Provide adequate public facilities to UGAs.

CFU 6.1 Require urban-level sanitary sewer or equivalent service in all UGAs.

CFU 6.1.1 Establish regulations for development that require sewer connectivity between UGA parcels or tracts.

CFU 6.1.2 Utilize large on-site sewage systems (LOSS), community septic systems, or individual on-site sewage systems combined with the installation of dry lines as an interim means to achieve urban densities within the UGA until such time sanitary sewer service is available.

CFU 6.1.3 In accordance with Island County Health and Washington State requirements, require connection to a public sewer system for new or extensively remodeled development located within 200 feet of a public sewer system.

CFU 6.1.4 Pursue wastewater solutions for the Freeland Non-Municipal Urban Growth Area (NMUGA).

CFU 6.1.4.1 In the Freeland NMUGA, consider the use of alternative sewage treatment techniques in areas that contain a significant concentration of critical areas, will be impacted by extreme rain and coastal flooding, or which have topographic challenges, discharge constraints, or critical aquifer recharge areas.

CFU 6.2 Research tools and methods for capital facilities and amenities to meet or exceed the baseline goals needed to address growth needs.

CFU 6.3 Prioritize Island County expenditures for public services and capital facilities in UGAs as an incentive to encourage development in urban areas.

CFU 6.4 Negotiate with municipalities and other providers of public facilities to coordinate planning for and development of UGAs.

CFU 6.4.1 The County and all municipalities shall conduct joint planning of associated UGAs to identify methods, costs, and funds to extend urban services and achieve urban densities or to define alternative UGA boundaries.

CFU 6.5 The coordination of capital improvements and land development must be accessible to all communities, especially those that have been historically underserved and marginalized, and provide clear, transparent, and timely information for impacted parties.

CFU 6.6 The County will coordinate with municipalities and use its Capital Facilities Element to support the CPPs pertaining to serving UGAs with urban services.

Goal 7 Evaluate risks to climate hazards for County-owned capital facilities and monitor greenhouse gas emissions in operations.

CFU 7.1 Use predictive models in considering locations for future siting and design of capital facilities, including changes to temperature, rainfall, and sea level, to help ensure they function as intended over their planned life cycle.

CFU 7.2 Create a managed retreat plan for County-owned facilities, including transportation infrastructure.

CFU 7.3 Complete an inventory on County government's greenhouse gas emissions.

CFU 7.3.1 Consider options for reducing the County government's greenhouse gas emissions, for example utilizing renewable energy, conservation, and efficiency technologies and practices.

Goal 8 **Coordinate with utility providers including water, wastewater, electricity, natural gas, telecommunications, transportation systems, etc. to ensure environmentally sensitive, equitable, reliable, and affordable access to utilities and facilities for all County residents.**

CFU 8.1 When reasonable and feasible, promote the co-location of public and/or private utility distribution facilities. Coordinate construction timing to minimize disruptions to the public and disturbances to the environment and archaeological resources, and to reduce the cost to the public for utility delivery.

CFU 8.2 Use utility corridors for shared uses, such as trails, open space, wildlife corridors, and recreation.

CFU 8.3 Buffer trees away from utility lines and transportation corridors to increase resilience and safety during storms.

CFU 8.4 Provide timely and effective notification to utility providers of road construction, and of maintenance and upgrades of existing roads to facilitate coordination of public and private utility trenching activities, where possible.

CFU 8.5 Encourage efficient, cost-effective, and reliable utility service by ensuring that land will be made available for the location of utility lines, including location within public transportation corridors, consistent with franchise terms and conditions including the possible payment of annual fees.

CFU 8.6 Coordinate land use and facility planning to allow eventual siting and construction of distribution lines within rights-of-way which are being dedicated or within roads which are being constructed or reconstructed.

CFU 8.7 New electrical and telecommunication distribution lines should be installed underground where feasible to increase climate resilience. Promote underground placement of existing distribution lines through such tools as local improvement districts. Encourage system design practices intended to minimize the number and duration of interruptions to customer service, including underground utility lines where practical.

CFU 8.7.1 Implement “Dig Once” policies to lay conduit for all infrastructure and coordinate with roadwork to ensure tax dollars are only spent once.

CFU 8.7.2 The County will work with utility providers to address issues with pole attachments and replacements in a manner that is fair and transparent to all applicable parties upfront.

CFU 8.9 New utility facilities should be located outside of critical areas to minimize disturbance.

CFU 8.10 While harmful biological effects due to proximity to utility facilities such as electrical transmission lines or cellular tower sites have not been conclusively demonstrated, significant concerns remain, and study of the issues is ongoing. To address these environmental and health concerns, the County and affected utilities should:

CFU 8.10.1 Promote siting of facilities with respect for climate-related hazards and environmental, watershed, and local ecological resources.

CFU 8.10.2 Monitor research into the health effects from utility facilities.

CFU 8.10.3 Adopt standards as necessary to protect the public from known health hazards.

CFU 8.10.4 Consider changes to regulations and policies as appropriate to allow new utility technologies.

CFU 8.11 Planning for utilities is the primary responsibility of the utility providers and must be consistent with the County Comprehensive Plan.

CFU 8.12 Incentivize enhancement, repairs, and replacements of obsolete or worn-out facilities to eliminate existing gaps or deficiencies in utility service and quality to meet the needs of current and future development.

CFU 8.13 Incentivize repair and replacement of utilities to improve utility resilience to climate impacts, prioritizing improvements in areas that are disproportionately affected by climate change.

CFU 8.14 Explore the creation of public utility districts (PUDs) to serve the community with water and/or wastewater.

CFU 8.15 Encourage communication among the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC), and utilities regulated by the WUTC, regarding the requirements of the Growth Management Act, especially the requirement that service be provided concurrently with or in advance of demand.

Goal 9

Plan and manage groundwater resources using the best available science to protect the quantity and quality and ensure their sustainable use for the benefit of current and future residents.

CFU 9.1 Provide water utilities with incentive programs to encourage participation in water conservation and aquifer recharge area protection programs.

CFU 9.2 Continue to participate with State agencies and with the public in developing, updating, and implementing tools to improve management of Island County’s limited groundwater resources, such as the Coordinated Water System Plan (CWSP), the Groundwater Management Program, and the Water Resource Management Plan.

CFU 9.3 Development must not be allowed to outstrip known water supplies. Consideration shall be given to the availability, susceptibility, and vulnerability of known groundwater resources when siting new development and making land use decisions, per Chapter 8.09 ICC and related policies.

CFU 9.4 New development shall connect to a public water system if located within the boundaries of a public water system.

CFU 9.5 Enact regulations to require that if a developed parcel needs to replace its well, the parcel shall be connected to a public water system if the parcel is located within water system boundaries.

CFU 9.6 Encourage the consolidation of smaller water systems into larger water districts to improve resiliency and long-term viability.

CFU 9.7 Island County will prohibit service overlaps for the expansion of existing water systems and the formation of new water systems per the CWSP.

CFU 9.8 New or expanding water systems will be required to report water usage at the source and impose conservation strategies and implementation measures per the CWSP.

CLIMATE RESILIENCE



Island County Comprehensive Plan

2025 Periodic Update

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CLIMATE ELEMENT

11.1 INTRODUCTION

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires local comprehensive plans to have a Climate Resilience Element. Climate elements must maximize economic, environmental, and social co-benefits and prioritize environmental justice to avoid worsening environmental health disparities. A climate element can take the form of a stand-alone comprehensive plan element or be integrated into several elements such as housing, transportation, and land use.

11.1.1 Relationship to Other Elements

Climate related goals, policies, and strategies are found throughout the other elements of the Comprehensive Plan. Goals and policies specifically related to climate change and resiliency, rather than incidentally related, appear in this element.

11.2 RESILIENCE SUB-ELEMENT

11.2.1 Requirements

As required by state law the Resilience Sub-Element must include but is not limited to:

- Address natural hazards created or aggravated by climate change, including sea level rise, landslides, flooding, drought, heat, smoke, wildfire, and other effects of changes to temperature and precipitation patterns; and
- Identify, protect, and enhance natural areas to foster climate resilience, as well as areas of vital habitat for safe species migration; and
- Identify, protect, and enhance community resilience to climate impacts, including social, economic, and built-environment factors, which support adaptation to climate impacts consistent with environmental justice.

11.2.2 Resilience

To identify, protect, and enhance natural areas and community resilience, Island County identified over 170 assets, including administrative and civic buildings, regional county & state parks, historic sites, ferry terminals, bridge, farms, natural preserves, waste handling facilities, water systems (as an asset versus individual water systems), fiber optic network, shorelines, electrical distribution, and other critical facilities. These assets have been organized into specific community sectors. Island County explored hazards, climate indicators, and climate impacts relevant to the identified assets and sectors.

TABLE 11.1 Community Assets by Sector

Sector	Assets
Agriculture & Food Systems	Hobby farms, commercial farms, grazing land, vineyards, dairy, and food production
Buildings & Energy	Utility lines, natural gas pipelines, government buildings, schools, churches and places of worship, hospitals, libraries, wharfs, and marinas
Cultural Resources	Historic sites and buildings, archeological resources, and cemeteries
Economic Development	Tourism, natural and marine resources, state & county parks, Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, fiber optic communications
Ecosystems	Shorelines, forests, grasslands, riparian areas, estuaries, and wetlands
Emergency Management	Fire stations, police stations, and emergency shelters
Health & Well-being	Naval Health Clinic, Whidbey Health Medical Center, clinics, senior living, and community centers
Transportation	Deception Pass Bridge, Mark Clark Bridge (SR 532), airports, highways, Clinton Ferry Terminal, Coupeville Ferry Terminal, trails, and park & rides
Waste Management	Transfer stations on Whidbey and Camano Islands, Coupeville Solid Waste Complex (hazardous waste), City of Oak Harbor, Langley, and Coupeville Wastewater Treatment Plants, septic systems, and RV dump stations
Water Resources	City of Anacortes Water Treatment Plant (surface water from the Skagit River serving Oak Harbor and Naval Air Station), Island County Sole Source Aquifer (serving individual wells, 294 Class A, and 586 Class B water systems)
Zoning & Development	Military, state & county parks, rural, multifamily, commercial, industrial, municipality (UGA), water

Hazards, climate indicators, and climate impacts specific to Island County were identified for each sector utilizing the Climate Mapping for a Resilient Washington (“CMRW”) webtool, the Coastal Hazard Resiliency Network Sea-level tool, and the USGS groundwater database. Priority climate hazards were identified based on the County’s existing plans and anecdotal information. The existing plans include the Comprehensive Plan, Shoreline Master Program, 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan, and Countywide Planning Policies. The climate hazards most significant to consider in the County are listed below.

Priority Climate Hazards

- Drought
- Extreme Precipitation
- Flooding
- Increased Storm Severity
- Reduced Snowpack
- Sea Level Rise
- Wildfire

Assets most vulnerable to these priority climate hazards are residences, agricultural farms, estuaries and wetlands, forests, industrial/manufacturing businesses, nature preserves, fire stations, roadways & bridges, wastewater treatment facilities, water supply infrastructure, schools, and telecommunication-fiber optic infrastructure.

Lower income households and people of color in Oak Harbor and with mobility difficulties are vulnerable to climate hazards. Areas in northeastern Camano Island and southeastern Whidbey Island have high exposure to sea-level rise, heat, and poor air quality and will have increased mortality rates due to natural hazard injuries and fatalities.

Drought presents a significant risk for Island County due to approximately 70 percent of the population's reliance on drinking water from various class A and class B water systems, individual wells, and 2-party systems across the County. The Climate Policy Advisory Team, along with the public and staff, identified water systems as a primary concern. Additionally, rising sea levels pose a threat by causing property damage and affecting the sole source aquifer these water systems depend on.

The Department of Ecology is currently undergoing an update to the Shoreline Management Act. This rulemaking is focused on sea level rise and will govern how shorelines are developed over the next twenty year planning period, starting with the update to Island County's Shoreline Management Plan in 2030.

The County recognizes the importance of using predictive data to identify risks for decision making purposes in climate resiliency planning. As part of planning for climate resiliency, the County will have to decide how to address managed retreat for County-owned assets in the next 20 years.

11.3 RESILIENCY GOALS AND POLICIES

The goals and policies in this element, and discussed throughout the Comprehensive Plan, relating to climate and resiliency were established to address priority hazards identified and preserve and enhance natural areas and community resilience. Each goal identified below is intended to help Island County improve community resilience by sector.

Integrated resiliency goals and policies are distributed throughout the Comprehensive Plan in addition to the resiliency policies included below.

11.3.1 Climate Resilience Sub-Element Goals & Policies

The following are the goals and associated policies for each goal. The policies are provided below each goal in a bulleted list.

Goal 1 **Increase climate literacy among general population. Provide information to the general public to increase the level of knowledge across the County for people to be more engaged.**

CL 1.1 Provide the Best Available Science (BAS) to understand the essential principles of Earth’s climate, geological, and water systems and the options to address climate change.

CL 1.2 Promote sources for credible information about climate change and make it accessible and keep it updated.

CL 1.3 Communicate about climate change in accurate and effective ways.

CL 1.4 All appropriate levels of leadership will make informed decisions related to climate change.

CL 1.4.1 Continue to implement Island County’s Climate Resolution (C-55-22).

CL 1.5 Educate permit applicants on the climate associated risks with new development or changes to existing development.

Goal 2 **Establish land use patterns that increase the resilience of the built environment, ecosystems, and communities to climate change.**

CL 2.1 Direct new development into areas where exposure to climate hazards (drought, flooding, and heat) is low.

CL 2.2 Conduct an environmental justice audit, including people living on shorelines and in heat sensitive areas, prior to creating new zoning designations or rezoning.

CL 2.3 Identify and implement strategies to increase the resilience of the shoreline environment to sea-level rise and other climate hazards, while also protecting shoreline and coastal wetland ecological functions, allowing water-dependent uses, and providing public access.

CL 2.4 Identify and protect agricultural and forested lands, including wildlife corridors, that provide climate resilience benefits from being converted to more developed land use types.

CL 2.5 Prohibit the expansion of polluting industries in overburdened communities via local zoning and development regulations.

Goal 3 **Protect and preserve water quality and quantity from drought, extreme heat, and other hazards exacerbated by climate change.**

CL 3.1 Every 5 years, review and, if necessary, update the Coordinated Water System Plan to evaluate the long term financial and water resource sustainability of class A and B water systems and develop strategies for long term sustainability of those water systems in light of growth, climate change, and operability.

CL 3.2 Utilize water conservation methods and technologies in development of irrigation infrastructure within County-owned parks and recreation areas to foster climate resilience.

CL 3.3 Require low-impact development best management practices, where feasible, for the development and incentivizing of green infrastructure to address increased storm intensities and stormwater runoff.

CL 3.4 Manage water resources and sole source aquifer sustainably in the face of climate change through smart irrigation, stormwater management, preventative maintenance, retention of forest cover, water conservation and wastewater reuse, plant selection, and landscape management.

CL 3.5 Encourage onsite gray water reuse systems to reduce water demand in private-sector commercial and residential buildings.

CL 3.6 Evaluate the long-term adequacy of stormwater infrastructure to ensure that changes in hydrological patterns (e.g., increases in flooding frequency) can be anticipated and managed effectively.

CL 3.7 Develop and implement a comprehensive drought resilience strategy that factors in projected climate impacts and sets action levels for different drought stages.

CL 3.8 Promote education programs on hazards associated with the use and disposal of chemicals including chemicals of emerging concern, pesticides, herbicides and petroleum products.

Goal 4 **Design and improve the local transportation system — including infrastructure, routes, and travel modes — so that it can withstand and recover quickly from the impacts of extreme weather events and other hazards exacerbated by climate change.**

CL 4.1 Design and site new and expanded roads to have the least possible adverse effect on the shoreline, account for sea-level rise projections, not result in a net loss of shoreline ecological functions, or adversely impact existing or planned water-oriented uses, public access, wildlife corridors, and habitat restoration and enhancement projects.

CL 4.2 Improve street connectivity and walkability, including trails, to serve as potential evacuation routes.

CL 4.3 Incorporate hydrologic climate impacts into the design of water-crossing structures (i.e., climate-smart culverts and bridges) for fish passage and habitat quality.

CL 4.4 Reduce stormwater impacts from transportation and development through watershed planning, redevelopment and retrofit projects, and low-impact development.

CL 4.5 Enhance the resilience of parks and recreational trails by assessing and addressing climate hazards and impacts.

Goal 5 **Ensure the protection and support the restoration of streams, riparian zones, estuaries, wetlands, shorelines, and to achieve healthy watersheds that are resilient to climate change.**

CL 5.1 Implement actions identified in the Island County Salmon Recovery Plan, Puget Sound Partnership Action Agenda, and Island County Shoreline Restoration Plan to improve the climate resilience of streams, shorelines, and riparian zones.

CL 5.2 Increase the climate resilience of native fish species and aquatic ecosystems by reducing the threat of aquatic invasive species (e.g., fish, plants, invertebrates).

CL 5.3 Increase aquatic habitat resilience to low summer flows by increasing water residence time, storing water on the landscape, conserving water, protecting groundwater, providing shade, and protecting water quality.

CL 5.4 Protect and promote the restoration of wetlands and corridors between wetlands to provide biological and hydrological connectivity that fosters resilience to flooding and other climate impacts.

CL 5.5 Utilize the Best Available Science in respect to sea-level rise for coastal and near-shore habitat restoration projects.

CL 5.6 Identify, protect, and restore aquatic and shoreline ecosystems including submerged aquatic vegetation, saltwater marshes, feeder bluffs, accretion beaches.

CL 5.7 Update the Shoreline Master Plan in 2030 and every 10 years after as directed by RCW 90.58.080.

Goal 6 Enhance emergency preparedness, response, and recovery efforts to mitigate risks and impacts associated with extreme weather and other hazards worsened by climate change.

CL 6.1 Support enhanced data collection for climate hazard events (extreme heat, flooding, etc.) of all magnitudes to provide a fuller understanding of the community’s hazard characteristics – including those affected by climate change.

CL 6.2 Support the implementation and ongoing updates of the County’s Community Wildfire Protection Plan (located within the Island County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan).

CL 6.3 Support the development of resilience hubs – community-serving facilities that are designed to support residents, coordinate communication, and distribute resources during emergencies.

CL 6.4 Factor climate impacts into the planning of operations and coordination of preparedness, response, and recovery activities among first-responders and partners, including public health, law enforcement, fire, school, and emergency medical services (EMS) personnel.

CL 6.5 Integrate a climate impacts risk assessment and policies into the local hazard mitigation plan.

CL 6.6 Incorporate sea-level rise information, along with tsunami hazard mapping, into critical area delineation for siting critical infrastructure, land-use planning, conservation, and emergency management.

CL 6.7 Reduce wildfire risk by enforcing burn bans.

CL 6.8 Designate alternative travel routes for critical transportation corridors for evacuation routes.

CL 6.9 Enhance resilience by supporting upgrades to marina and airport facilities to serve as critical infrastructure for emergency response, evacuation, and supply distribution during extreme weather events or other climate-related disasters.

Goal 7 Utilize local conservation districts to ensure that the local agricultural economy – including food and materials producers, distributors, and sellers – is resilient to the impacts of extreme weather and other natural hazards and resources are coordinated, funded, and staffed to support farmers in making informed business decisions in a changing climate.

CL 7.1 Expand local food security and the food-related economy to address climate impacts and increase access to healthy and affordable foods by encouraging local food distribution centers, proven food assistance models, and highlighting farmers markets and other locations that accept assistance programs.

CL 7.2 Promote conservation district programs to educate the local agricultural sectors and the general public on methods to adapt to changing climate conditions and capitalize on sustainable business opportunities.

CL 7.3 Utilize conservation districts to promote environmentally sustainable water-storage and land management practices that help agricultural producers and land managers adapt to changing conditions and reduce production and conservation losses while balancing ecosystem needs.

CL 7.4 Direct citizens to technical assistance from conservation programs to meet increasing demands and continued viability around climate adaptation.

CL 7.5 Support, and direct citizens to, conservation programs and resources that provide information and direct financial assistance to farmers and residents to implement best management practices that address impacts of climate change.

Goal 8 **Ensure that buildings and infrastructure are sited, designed, built, and updated sustainably to reduce environmental impacts and remain resilient to extreme weather and other hazards worsened by climate change.**

CL 8.1 Require the design and construction of commercial and residential buildings and their surrounding sites to reduce and treat stormwater runoff and pollution.

CL 8.2 Encourage the use of lower-carbon building materials in new construction and building retrofits to reduce embodied carbon.

CL 8.3 Adopt fire-resilience standards for new and redeveloped sites in high-risk wildfire areas.

CL 8.4 Encourage building and landscaping designs for passive survivability to ensure that they will stay at a safe temperature for occupants if the power goes out.

CL 8.5 Create a managed retreat plan for County-owned facilities, including transportation infrastructure.

Goal 9 **Protect community health and well-being from the impacts of climate-exacerbated hazards — prioritizing focus on overburdened communities — and ensure that the most vulnerable residents do not bear disproportionate health impacts.**

CL 9.1 Evaluate and implement habitat reduction and population control for arthropod disease vectors (e.g., mosquitos and ticks) and zoonotic disease reservoirs using integrated pest-management methods.

CL 9.2 Develop and maintain a program for addressing the social and mental health needs of displaced populations following disasters.

CL 9.3 Mitigate community exposure to wildfire smoke by providing personal protective equipment and filter fans, and incentivizing infrastructure updates (e.g., HVAC updates and MERV 13 filters for air intake) for facilities that serve high-risk populations.

CL 9.4 Promote and connect citizens to programs that distribute cooling units and install heat pumps.

CL 9.5 Develop and implement a wildfire smoke resilience strategy in partnership with local residents, emergency management officials, Northwest Clean Air Agency officials, and other stakeholders.

CL 9.6 Explore an urban heat resilience strategy for County UGAs that includes land use, urban design, urban greening, and waste heat reduction actions.

CL 9.7 Utilize and update local health impact assessments and other tools to address the potential impacts of health, equity, and climate change on vulnerable communities.

CL 9.8 Prioritize the development of anti-displacement programs in overburdened communities when increasing densities.

CL 9.9 Review land use maps and identify opportunities or barriers to responding to rapid population growth or decline, rebuilding housing and services after disasters, and other extreme climate impact scenarios.

CL 9.10 Provide overburdened communities information and assistance to offset potential cost increases associated with conversion to non-fossil-fuel energy sources.

Goal 10 **Protect and enhance the climate resilience of forests by implementing climate-smart forest management.**

CL 10.1 Reduce loss of private forestland through forest stewardship education and identify opportunities to expand incentives for forest landowners.

CL 10.2 Implement ordinances to maintain and expand tree canopy cover, improve tree and watershed health, prioritize carbon sequestration, and plan for recovery after wildfire.

CL 10.3 Adopt a forest master plan and implementing ordinances to maintain and expand tree canopy cover, improve tree and watershed health, prioritize carbon sequestration, encourage preventative fire management practices and plan for recovery after wildfire, and build climate resilience.

CL 10.4 Encourage management of tree canopy and forests (including parks, greenbelts, and urban forests) to decrease climate-exacerbated risks from severe wildfires, protect residents, and improve ecosystem health and habitat through programs like Washington's small forest landowner assistance cost-share and stewardship programs.

CL 10.5 Ensure that all forestry management plans include considerations for the impacts of climate change.

CL 10.6 Support and direct citizens to conservation programs and resources that increase resiliency to wildfire events and sustainable forest management.