

Land Use and Urbanization Element

Background

Vision

Through the community visioning process that occurred in 2019, residents described their vision for a White Salmon that is walkable and compact, with a vibrant downtown full of small businesses, easy access to nature and recreation, and small-town character. To achieve this vision, residents identified several priority actions, including developing a network of small streets and pedestrian paths, right-sizing infrastructure, supporting local business needs, and implementing zoning amendments to encourage a diverse housing stock.

This community vision and supporting actions are related to land use and urbanization policies. The land use and urbanization context of a community sets the framework for how residential, commercial, industrial, and public land uses are organized across a community and the community's allocation of these land uses to meet anticipated growth.

Land Use and Urbanization Focus Area Statement

Land use and urbanization policy are major focal points of this Comprehensive Plan and this element helps build a policy foundation for the other elements, including housing, economic development, and transportation. The following focus area statement, created during the community visioning process, guides the goals and policies included in the Land Use and Urbanization Comprehensive Plan element.

“The built environment in White Salmon is integrated with the beauty of its setting. An established area for future growth underscores the important contribution each new development brings, and the obligation to reinforce our village’s character. Natural features and views from the bluff to the Columbia River and Mt. Hood are central to the city’s sense of place. Defined neighborhoods surround the historic business district along Jewett Boulevard. A diverse stock of quality, well-designed homes serve the full range of ages, incomes, and households. New neighborhoods expand housing opportunities and add to a network of green spaces. A secondary, mixed-use area in annexed county land near town and close to city utilities complements the downtown and maintains the city’s walkable character.”

Existing Conditions

The Land Use and Urbanization element and the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map (see Figure X) are two major focal points of the Comprehensive Plan. The purpose of the Land Use and Urbanization element is to establish goals and policies to help accommodate population and housing growth that contributes to quality of life in White Salmon. By combining land use designations and urbanization strategies with goals, policies, and implementation measures, the Land Use and Urbanization element will help the City of White Salmon protect its character as a walkable, vibrant community with a strong sense of place.

Land Use in the City of White Salmon and its Urban Exempt Area

For the purposes of this Comprehensive Plan, the term “city” means the land within the incorporated area of White Salmon. The term “Urban Exempt Area” means the area outside of the city of White Salmon, that is exempt from the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act (Scenic Area Act) regulations that were established by the U.S. Congress in 1986 and intended to

accommodate the future growth of the city. Among other purposes, the Scenic Area Act legislation encourages sustainable growth in existing urban areas. Scenic Area Act regulations do not apply within the White Salmon incorporated area and the Urban Exempt Area. As a result, this means that most of the future residential and job growth in the White Salmon area must occur in the city and its Urban Exempt Area, because this growth is not allowed at urban densities and is highly regulated outside of these areas. Perhaps even more crucially, the Urban Exempt Area is the only area where White Salmon can grow outward, so it is especially important that land be planned and used efficiently. The Urban Exempt Area, consisting of approximately 2,200 acres, is now developed with low-density residential uses and some commercial uses, and remains under County jurisdiction until properties are annexed into the city.

In addition to the Scenic Area Act, the land use regulatory framework in the city of White Salmon and Klickitat County is established by the Washington State Growth Management Act, the Shorelines Management Act, and various other state and local requirements – all adapted to meet local community development needs. These state and federal acts influence where new development can occur in White Salmon and its Urban Exempt Area, in addition to local regulations, like comprehensive plan designations, zoning, and development standards. Understanding and working within this context is important for achieving the community’s vision.

Existing Plans and Development Regulations

The Land Use and Urbanization Element of the Comprehensive Plan serves to provide a policy framework for the future use of land throughout the city and guide how development can occur. The Comprehensive Plan is used as a policy directive when development regulations conflict or when zone changes are requested. Specific development standards, including permitted uses, site planning, design, and land division standards, are found in the White Salmon Municipal Code, as well as other applicable City regulations. The County has adopted the Bingen/White Salmon Urban-Exempt Area Plan (dated November 1991) as a subarea plan within their Comprehensive Plan.

The Urbanization Study from FCS GROUP (Appendix X) evaluates both the land demand for a variety of different uses, and the amount of land that is available for development, also known as “buildable lands.” The Urbanization Study also analyzes the development potential and associated challenges of the Urban Exempt Area.

Table 1: Existing Plans and Development Regulations

Plan or Development Regulation	Date and Citation
Title 16, Land Divisions, White Salmon Municipal Code Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design Standards (16.45) • Short Plats and Short Subdivisions (16.65) • Boundary Line Adjustments-Review and Approval • Illegally Divided Land (16.85) 	
Title 17, Zoning, White Salmon Municipal Code Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Districts and Boundaries (17.16) • Design and Use Standards (17.68) • Mixed Use Planned Unit Development (17.74) • Residential Planned Unit Development (17.75) 	

Plan or Development Regulation	Date and Citation
Title 19, Administration of Land Development Regulations, White Salmon Municipal Code Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulation Amendments (19.20) 	
Urbanization Study	May 2020, FCS GROUP

Land Use Designations

Comprehensive Plan land use designations and development regulations help encourage development that is consistent with the City’s goals and policies, including space for a variety of housing types, offices and businesses, industrial uses and warehouses, shopping and restaurants, schools and libraries, fire and police stations, medical facilities, parks and recreation areas, roads and streets, and land for utilities.

To help achieve the City’s vision, lands are designated for a range of land uses and intensities. The Comprehensive Plan, supported by the Land Use Map, identifies different lands in the city designated for residential, commercial, industrial, or other purposes.

The intent of the Comprehensive Plan designations and Land Use Map are to provide guidance for the desired use, intensity, relationship of land uses to each other, and the desired character for development. Additionally, these land use designations serve as an underlying guide for the zoning ordinance and map, which dictate specific allowed uses and development standards. The zoning ordinance and zoning map are the implementation tools of the Comprehensive Plan, and help the City evaluate and regulate land use proposals according to the vision presented in the Comprehensive Plan.

Residential Land

Low-Density Residential (LDR)

Lands designated as *Low-Density Residential*, or *LDR*, are areas predominantly characterized by single-family detached homes. These areas are found primarily on the north and west sides of the city and have larger lot sizes to maintain the area’s suburban character and sense of privacy between lots. Single-family detached houses may include manufactured or mobile homes.

Medium-Density Residential (MDR)

Lands designated as *Medium-Density Residential*, or *MDR*, are areas that are usually already developed and are located closer to the center of town. Lands with this designation allow more urban-type development, that includes single-family detached housing, as well as two-family homes such as duplexes or townhomes, and manufactured home parks. Additional housing types allowed in this area include accessory dwelling units and cottage housing.

Mobile/Manufactured Home Residential (MMHR)

Lands designated as *Mobile/Manufactured Home Residential*, or *MMHR*, are areas that are typically already developed with mobile home or manufactured home parks. Lands with this designation encourage medium- and high-density, attainable housing by preserving existing and allowing new mobile home and manufactured home parks, and other types of high-density, affordable housing.

High-Density Residential/Mixed Use (HDR/MU)

Lands designated as *High-Density Residential/Mixed-Use*, or *HDR/MU*, are intended to serve as high-density residential areas and act as buffers between commercial areas and Low-Density Residential neighborhoods. Lands with this designation are primarily intended for multifamily structures and apartment buildings. Other housing types, such as accessory dwelling units and cottage housing, are also allowed in these areas. Commercial uses are also allowed in this area as part of a mixed-use development (primarily in the form of ground-floor retail or commercial office space).

Commercial and Industrial Lands

There are lands designated in both the city of White Salmon and the Urban Exempt Area that are designated for commercial uses. Currently no lands specifically designated for industrial uses are within the incorporated area, as the city is limited in the ability to provide larger sites for industrial development that are free from critical areas and appropriately served by infrastructure. However, the city currently has lands designated as *Riverfront Planned District*, to provide for master-planned developments that may include light manufacturing.

Commercial (C)

Lands designated as *Commercial*, or *C*, are envisioned as primarily retail and commercial office areas. Businesses that would likely operate in these areas include grocery stores, pharmacies, restaurants and breweries, banks, hardware and home improvement stores, personal services, and convenience goods for local residential neighborhoods, nearby communities, and visitors alike. There are three areas designated for commercial use, including one on the north side of the city, adjacent to similar commercial areas in the Urban Exempt Area. These areas are largely developed, and infill and redevelopment are expected to continue over the next 20 years.

Riverfront (RF)

The city of White Salmon fronts the Columbia River for approximately three-quarters of a mile. This land, south of State Route 14 (SR 14) is designated as *Riverfront* (RF). This land is intended to allow master-planned developments that can include recreational, commercial, light industrial, and limited residential uses. This land is largely constrained by natural features and is subject to the City's critical areas ordinance. Because of its close proximity to SR 14, secondary access roads—rather than direct access to the highway—are encouraged and in some cases required.

Land Use Designations and Zoning

While comprehensive plan designations serve to help the community maintain sufficient land for all the various uses, and provide guidance about the general character and structure of uses in those respective areas, zoning serves as the official set of regulations, restrictions, and development standards that regulate the use of land. The City's zoning code closely mirrors the underlying comprehensive plan designations. The *Public Use Overlay (PU)* provides areas for public and quasi-public uses, publicly owned or controlled parks and recreation facilities, and governmental buildings. This "district" may act as an overlay to any underlying district where the proposed use is permitted subject to site plan review and approval, or as a "conditional use" if the proposed use is a public facility under public ownership. Some proposed uses may be authorized as a conditional use by the planning commission if the use is compatible with and will not negatively impact the surrounding district. How comprehensive plan land use designations are implemented by zoning designations is captured in Table X.

Table X: Comprehensive Plan Designation to Zoning District

Plan Designation	Low-Density Residential (LDR)	Medium-Density Residential (MDR)	Mobile/Manufactured Home Residential (MMHR)	High-Density Residential/Mixed Use (HDR/MU)	Commercial	Riverfront
Implementing Zoning District						
Single-Family Large Lot Residential (RL)	✓					
Single-Family Residential (R1)	✓					
Two-Family Residential (R2)		✓				
Mobile Home/Manufactured Home Residential Park (MHRP)			✓			
Multifamily Residential (R3)				✓		
General Commercial				✓	✓	
Riverfrontage (RD)						✓
Public Use Overlay (PU)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Urbanization¹

Overview

Planning for the Urban Exempt Area is important to control urban sprawl and discourage “leapfrog development.” Leapfrog development is characterized by intensive residential, commercial or industrial development separated by parcels of rural or agricultural land. Due to expected population growth, the City will eventually need to expand and will likely incorporate portions of the Urban Exempt Area into city limits through annexation. This process will help the City provide urban services such as water, wastewater and sidewalks to the annexed land; in turn, these areas are expected to become developed at urban intensities over time. The presence of the National Scenic Area beyond the Urban Exempt Area makes it imperative that the City work with Klickitat County to plan for and consider annexing the Urban Exempt Area.

Understanding the services available in the Urban Exempt Area is important in identifying how much growth can be accommodated in the future. Residential development at urban densities is reliant on sufficient road, water and wastewater networks; while White Salmon is reasonably positioned to benefit

¹ The Urbanization Study, authored by FCS GROUP in May 2020, serves as a significant source of data for the urbanization portion of this element, and includes information sourced from the U.S. Census Bureau, as well as original data collection and analysis. References for this study are established at the beginning of each subsection and subsequent data can be assumed to be sourced from the same study unless cited differently. The complete Urbanization Study can be found in Appendix X.

from economic growth and development in the region, the amount of development in the Urban Exempt Area is directly dependent upon the City's ability to provide adequate infrastructure service to sites and buildings.

The Urban Exempt Area currently receives services from both Klickitat County and the City of White Salmon, and the County maintains the road system within it. Some residential properties are connected to the City of White Salmon's water and sewer systems, but most use private wells and septic systems. Law enforcement is primarily provided by the County Sheriff but the Bingen-White Salmon Police Department patrols and responds to incidents in the Urban Exempt Area through a mutual aid agreement between the County and City. The Urban Exempt Area is in Fire Protection District 3, but the City of White Salmon Fire Department responds to all fire calls in the area. The Urban Exempt Area receives ambulance service from Klickitat County Emergency Services District No. 1, but Fire Protection District 3 also has an emergency response vehicle.

Currently, the Urban Exempt Area is predominantly composed of subdivided lots ranging from 1/2 acre to more than 20 acres. Some developments have established Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions, which regulate the form of development allowed.

Planning in the Urban Exempt Area

Klickitat County is the permitting jurisdiction and exercises sole planning authority over the Urban Exempt Area. With this in mind, it is vital that the City of White Salmon and Klickitat County coordinate planning and management of development within the Urban Exempt Area to promote development in a sensible, well-planned manner.

Buildable Lands and Forecasted Land Needs

Buildable land supply in White Salmon and the Urban Exempt Area is limited, as documented by the Urbanization Study, completed by FCS GROUP (Appendix X). The study identified limitations in the supply of land across all categories (residential, commercial, and industrial), making it especially important that the City coordinate with Klickitat County to plan future land uses in the Urban Exempt Area. Key findings from the Urbanization Study include the following.

City of White Salmon

- There are approximately 117 acres of vacant, partially vacant, or redevelopable land in White Salmon, the vast majority of which is zoned for Low-Density Residential uses. This land at current densities could accommodate 479 dwelling units.
- There is no industrial land in White Salmon, and there are only a few vacant commercial parcels, mostly located within the Riverfront Planned District. There are approximately 14 acres that could be redeveloped with higher-intensity commercial uses over time.

Urban Exempt Area

- There are approximately 369 acres of vacant, partially vacant, or redevelopable land in the UEA, but most of it is designated for very Low-Density Residential development. A few properties are zoned for MDR housing, but they are either already developed or have development constraints resulting from environmental features.
- In contrast to the City of White Salmon, the Urban Exempt Area has parcels zoned for industrial development in addition to commercial land. There are approximately 8 acres of vacant land for commercial use and approximately 76 acres of vacant industrial land at the Port of Klickitat. There are redevelopment opportunities in the Urban Exempt Area as well.

Forecasted Potential Land Needs

- White Salmon may need about 1,020 new dwelling units over the next 20 to 30 years in order to accommodate expected population growth. This forecasted housing would require approximately 182 acres of land, but only 117 acres of land is available in the city limits. White Salmon would need to annex up to 76 acres of land in the Urban Exempt Area to accommodate this growth.
- Over the next 20 to 30 years, White Salmon will need to develop between 9 and 18 acres of land for commercial purposes and between 9 and 22 acres of land for industrial uses.

Aesthetics and Design

The aesthetics of a community are a core component of defining a “sense of place,” which is the sentiment that a town or place has a strong sense of identity that is proudly embraced by residents and easily recognizable to outsiders. Achieving a sense of place requires investing in a variety of placemaking strategies, such as building and supporting vibrant public spaces.

Urban and architectural design standards for development may have an important role in setting character-defining qualities of a town, and most commonly use themes such as massing and scale, materiality, and landscaping to support a community’s vision for the “feel” of their town. Visual interest provided by streetscapes with strong design standards supports walkable and pedestrian friendly environments. These efforts make good economic sense; the Main Street America approach, which is well known for supporting vibrant and prosperous downtowns and Main Streets across the country, relies on design as one of its core Four Points and a critical part of their transformation strategy. From an economic development perspective, design encourages locals and tourists to patronize of local businesses because of the inviting atmosphere.

Ultimately, the intention of design and aesthetic standards is to ensure an objective and attainable level of site and building design and construction quality without eliminating or overly limiting creativity and flexibility. As White Salmon grows, it will be important that the Comprehensive Plan sets the stage for aesthetic considerations to preserve the city’s identity, and maintain the visual qualities that make it attractive, while discouraging incompatible development.

Goals and Policies

Land use and urbanization goals and policies will help ensure that future development is consistent with the community vision, and that growth occurs in an orderly manner according to the community’s values. Goals and policies are presented for three land use and urbanization topic areas.

- Compact and Efficient Land Use – focuses on land use patterns and supporting housing and employment choice
- Urbanization – focuses on policies for the Urban Exempt Area and accommodating growth
- Aesthetics and Design – focuses on maintaining community character and enhancing White Salmon’s sense of place

Compact and Efficient Land Use Goal

GOAL LU-1: Establish and maintain a land use pattern that accommodates the current and future needs of the City and provides housing and employment choices that are cohesive with the community's vision.

Policy LU-1.1: Promote new development in areas with existing public services and near transportation networks and essential facilities, to better support a variety of housing and employment choices. Discourage suburban sprawl and “leapfrog” development by promoting redevelopment or infill development to support the efficient use of land downtown, near the hospital commercial area and in the River Frontage District.

Policy LU-1.2: Revise White Salmon’s Land Use Map to provide clear guidance to property owners on which lands can accommodate future residential, commercial and industrial growth consistent with the City’s vision.

Policy LU-1.3: Encourage mixed-use development, with residential and commercial components, that fosters small business development, an increase in net new housing and employment opportunities and a walkable, compact community that reduces car trips.

Urbanization Goal

GOAL LU-2: Collaborate with Klickitat County on land use planning for the Urban Exempt Area, ensuring a common vision for development, orderly land division and infrastructure provision, and the ability to accommodate future residential and employment needs.

Policy LU-2.1: In partnership with Klickitat County, consider developing a subarea plan for the Urban Exempt Area in conjunction with a “planned action” environmental impact statement. This subarea plan and associated planned action environmental impact statement would address the following.

- Identifying and mapping appropriate land use designations for the Urban Exempt Area, considering future land use needs, development demand, and current adjacent land uses.
- Planning for adequate public infrastructure and facilities—especially water and wastewater infrastructure—in a way that efficient, cost-effective, and supportive of future desired development and annexation.
- Planning for phasing of annexation.

Policy LU-2.2: Negotiate and adopt an Inter-Governmental Agreement with Klickitat County, that establishes a common vision for future development, and coordinates land use planning and decision making within the Urban Exempt Area. This Inter-Governmental Agreement should include common development standards and review procedures for the Urban Exempt Area, to ensure that infrastructure improvements take place concurrently with development. This Inter-Governmental Agreement should be implemented jointly and periodically updated and renewed as necessary to remain effective.

Policy LU-2.3: Participate in Klickitat County’s long-range planning efforts by ensuring City consistency with Countywide planning policies, reviewing and commenting on proposed development in the Urban Exempt Area, coordinating on current planning actions when mutually beneficial, providing updated data, and proposing mutually beneficial urbanization policies during County-led planning processes.

Policy LU-2.4: As part of the Inter-Governmental Agreement process, work collaboratively with Klickitat County to establish a mutual set of urbanization policies for the Urban Exempt Area, including formalizing development standards and coordination between City and County on topics resulting from the subarea plan and associated planned action environmental impact statement. These topics may include, but are not limited to, the following.

- Road development standards that are reasonably practicable for rural dwellers to achieve, but that can and will be readily improved to meet City standards upon annexation.
- Future street connection plans that ensure access routes are adequate and connectivity is maintained in the long term.
- Regulations that address water and wastewater connection requirements and whether individual, permit-exempt wells may be allowed in the City's water service area.
- Uniform standards for implementation and maintenance of alternative wastewater treatment systems when they are deemed necessary and feasible as best means of service expansion.
- Requirements for minimum lot size, minimum lot dimensions, and dwelling unit density targets that support lot division that accommodates urban residential densities and typologies.
- Requirements for shadow platting to help predict and accommodate future land division and development.
- Coordination on critical areas issues, including mitigation, such as banking and off-site restoration and enhancement in lieu of on-site mitigation for larger project impacts elsewhere in the County.
- Identifying best tools to ensure equitable landowner participation for necessary improvements to roads or other service upgrades at time of annexation.
- Transfer of Development Rights from Wild and Scenic River Management Area into the Urban Exempt Area or less developed portions of the Urban Exempt Area.

Policy LU-2.5: In response to urbanization needs and with support from Klickitat County, encourage and support annexation of lands within the Urban Exempt Area into the city by:

- Developing an annexation policy and codes to guide the process.
- Cooperating with property owners that have requested annexation.

[Aesthetics and Design Goal](#)

GOAL LU-3: Establish and maintain design and aesthetic standards that preserve and enhance White Salmon's "sense of place," ensuring an objective level of site and building design and construction quality without eliminating or overly limiting creativity and flexibility.

Policy LU-3.1: With public input, consider developing and adopting a set of urban design and architectural standards that support and enhance the character-defining qualities of White Salmon, including its "small-town feel" and "sense of place." Form based codes and/or conventional regulatory tools can be used.

Policy LU-3.2: Support vibrant and attractive public spaces, and streets that are walkable and pedestrian-friendly. This can be accomplished by using visual interest features and landscaping to enhance streetscapes, and fostering inclusive, people-oriented public spaces. Long stretches of blank walls, palisades, or inactive ground floors should be avoided.