



# York Neighborhood Plan

*As adopted by Ordinance No. 8868 and amended by Ordinance 8946, 9873, 2004-12-087, 2006-12-121, 2009-11-069, 2010-12-077 and 2014-09-049.*

**Neighborhood Plan Adoption:** In 1980, the Bellingham Plan was adopted and included individual plans for each neighborhood. When the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) was adopted in 1990, the City was required to update and amend the Bellingham Plan to include comprehensive planning elements required by the GMA. The Bellingham Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1995 and again included all of the individual neighborhood plans.

**Neighborhood Plan Amendment:** The Bellingham Municipal Code (BMC) 20.20 includes procedures by which individual property owners may petition the City for an amendment to an individual neighborhood plan. This may be a simple text amendment to address a condition or concern in a particular neighborhood or it may be a request for a change to the land use designation in a portion of a neighborhood. Because the neighborhood plans are adopted as part of the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan, the GMA restricts amendments to once per year. The deadline for submitting neighborhood plan amendments to the City is December 1 of each year (See BMC 20.20). An amendment to a neighborhood plan is made by ordinance. All of the changes made to this plan since it was originally adopted are listed on the last page of the plan.

**Neighborhood Plan Update:** Periodically, individual neighborhood plans merit a complete update due to changes of conditions in the neighborhood and/or the City. A complete neighborhood plan update can be a complex process requiring a great deal of time, public participation, and planning staff resources. Some of the individual neighborhood plans that were originally adopted in 1980 have received complete updates, while others have not.

# YORK NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

## I. NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

### General

The York Neighborhood is one of the City's older areas, with many large, well-built homes on sandstone foundations. Several sandstone outcroppings, such as the one at the old Franklin School site, provide the neighborhood with distinctive landmarks. Because of its proximity to the downtown, the neighborhood is a convenient and a well-liked place to live. Families of all ages live in the neighborhood, with a recent trend emerging of younger adults buying older homes in which to settle and raise families. This reverses an earlier trend of conversion of many single-family homes to duplexes or boarding houses.

Despite the presence of several larger homes, the majority of the houses are small, and are built on smaller lots of about 4,100 square feet. This creates a rather high population density and lack of open spaces. The landscape is established, however, with many trees and shrubs. Most of the streets have curbs, gutters, and sidewalks. The character is primarily single-family residential in nature.

The York area is bounded on the north by Whatcom Creek and Meador Street, and on the south by the commercial area along Samish Way. On the west it is bounded by Ellis, Holly and State Streets, while Interstate-5 extends the length of the eastern edge.

The neighborhood is within walking distance of the downtown and is bisected by Lakeway, an emerging commercial strip. Lincoln Square, a 198-unit highrise apartment building for senior citizens and a convalescent center are also located in the neighborhood.

### History

Historically, the York Neighborhood was perhaps Bellingham's earliest middle-class suburban neighborhood. Although houses were built as early as 1889, and as late as 1970, the majority of homes were built between 1890 and 1910. The neighborhood contains many examples of fine, middle-class Victorian architecture. Historically, it is a neighborhood with strong suburban cohesion and few commercial influences not related to neighborhood needs.

Although there are no sites in the York Neighborhood that are currently on the National Register, there are areas that are of local historical interest that should be conserved as the neighborhood is upgraded.

On State Street there are two fine examples of sites of local interest. The Bellingham Labor Temple, 1700 West State Street, built in 1914, is an excellent example of larger, wood-frame buildings of its era. The J.J. Larson Block, 1328-1300 North State Street,

was designed especially as a livery stable and warehouse. It remains the largest and most substantial livery stable structure in the city.

At 313 - 315 East Holly Street is the Odd Fellows Hall, a three-story brick structure built in 1905, as the home of the Bellingham YMCA. Designed by Alfred Lee, an architect with four local structures of his design on the National Register, the building is a good example of major turn-of-the-century brick and sandstone, storefront structures in Bellingham.

There are several churches that are architectural assets to the neighborhood: The Glad Tidings Tabernacle at 1430 North Garden Street, built in 1902; the Unitarian Fellowship Hall at 1474 Franklin, built in 1910; the Garden Street Methodist Church at 1330 North Garden, built in 1912; the former church building at 1446 Franklin; and the Bethel Fellowship at Franklin and Grant, built in 1918.

The Magnolia Court Apartments, built in 1908 at Magnolia between Garden and High Streets, is a good example of the late Victorian "Flat" architecture common to many apartment buildings at the turn of the century.

## **Land Use**

Population is fairly evenly distributed throughout the neighborhood. Existing holding capacity based on the 1967 Land Use Plan is 2,400 individuals or basically the population estimated for the area in 1976, and projected for the future. Land use patterns are therefore expected to remain as they exist today.

The area is dominated by residential land uses. This older, single-family neighborhood had been undergoing transition to some degree as multi-family living and the student population increased in the 1960's and 1970's. However, an influx of younger families looking for lower cost homes convenient to the central area appears to be reversing this trend.

## **Neighborhood Plan Proposals**

### **York Design Objectives (YDOs)**

- YDO-1** Apply for Historic District designation (national, state or local) in the York Neighborhood.
- YDO-2** Enforce and expand current regulatory codes to prevent degradation of existing historic housing stock and remove incentives to neglect such properties.
- YDO-3** Include York Neighborhood in the City's development of an Historic Neighborhood Design Guidelines and Standards document, with open participation of any and all York residents, property and business stakeholders, to encourage new development that is in scale with and architecturally compatible with the historic character of York; and that the neighborhood's original character of single-family homes is preserved.

- YDO-4** Add the supporting open space, parks and recreational opportunities needed, and pedestrian/bicycle routes along greened, safe streets and trails, to support the present and anticipated population.
- YDO-5** The York Neighborhood supports the use of environmentally sensitive planning and construction for multi-unit construction and remodeling.

## **II. OPEN SPACE**

Existing open space opportunities are centered on Franklin Park and Rock Hill Park. Franklin Park, consisting of the old Franklin School site, is bounded on the west by a sandstone outcropping, and has been developed as a multi-use park for all ages and abilities with a multi-purpose lawn area, children's playground equipment, a basketball court, picnic shelter, internal path loop and other amenities. This facility will serve Sehome Neighborhood as well as York.

Right-of-way within the 1200 block of Franklin Street that has not been improved, including the street island north of Franklin Park, should be retained to the greatest extent feasible as open space. Neighborhood residents have contributed countless volunteer hours in coordination with the Parks Volunteer Program to restore these areas with natural vegetation, and provide public access through a trail system, benches and signage. As a potential matter of rezoning this land to Public and formally incorporating it into Franklin Park, the City should examine the feasibility of vacating the right-of-way within the 1200 block of Franklin Street between Whatcom Street and Lakeway Drive while retaining public and private easements as necessary for access, utility and other essential services.

Several areas along the freeway, James and King Streets are owned by the State Highway Department and would serve as small open spaces and tot lots, possibly connecting as a linear park system.

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**THE PIECES OF HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT LAND ALONG THE FREEWAY SHOULD BE EMPHASIZED AS A BUFFER AND LINEAR OPEN SPACE.**

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Analysis of existing conditions and open space opportunities in the neighborhood finds very few that are available north of Lakeway. The York Neighborhood is particularly deficient in small play lots for young children, and much of the play occurs in the streets.

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**PARK SPACE SHOULD BE ACQUIRED NORTH OF LAKEWAY.**

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The trail system along Whatcom Creek, which is part of a city-wide system, should be developed. This serves not only the neighborhood but has city-wide significance.

The Whatcom Creek Greenway and Trail should be connected along the creek, and trailside facilities provided midway between Maritime Heritage Park and Whatcom Falls Park in Area 1. As the surrounding neighborhoods infill, open space, trails and parks support the health and well being of the community, and should be pursued. This location along the creek would connect the Whatcom Greenway Trail System and

provide facilities along the creek, supporting an active pedestrian and biking lifestyle, and serve persons with varied physical abilities and skills. A continuous trail system provides for an urban separator and access to the creek.

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THE WHATCOM CREEK GREENWAY CORRIDOR SHOULD BE CONNECTED ALONG WHATCOM CREEK IN AREA 1. AS OWNERSHIP CHANGE, THE POSSIBILITY OF THE CITY ACQUIRING PROPERTY FOR OPEN SPACE, TRAIL, PARK AND RIPARIAN CORRIDOR PURPOSES SHOULD BE PURSUED.

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### III. PUBLIC FACILITIES AND UTILITIES

York Neighborhood is close to many of the civic opportunities in the City Center such as the Library, City Hall, and other governmental services. No schools, however, exist directly in the neighborhood, and elementary school children must be bused to Carl Cozier School just east of the freeway.

Lincoln Square, a 198-unit residential high-rise for senior citizens, and a nursing home are two special facilities located in the neighborhood.

Water and sewer services are available throughout the neighborhood. Curbs and gutters provide generally adequate runoff for the area, however, at times during heavy rains some of the area becomes flooded.

The Comprehensive Drainage Plan completed in 1973, by Kramer, Chin and Mayo, Inc., identified the existing storm drainage along Ellis and Humboldt Streets as serving the area. Flooding along Whatcom Creek will be decreased with improvements made to the north of it under current proposals.

A fire station is proposed for the York Neighborhood but its location is unresolved at this point. This issue is one that has direct importance to the area.

The City of Bellingham's Six-Year Construction Program from 1979 to 1984, calls for the improvement of drainage, streets and sidewalks in both Sunnyland and York Neighborhoods.

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SIDEWALK, DRAINAGE, AND STREET IMPROVEMENTS SHOULD BE MADE WHENEVER INADEQUATE CONDITIONS EXIST. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET STANDARDS SHOULD BE 28 FEET WITH CURBS, GUTTERS, AND SIDEWALKS.

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OVERHEAD UTILITIES SHOULD BE PLACED UNDERGROUND WHENEVER STREET WORK IS DONE.

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Click here to view the [York Neighborhood Arterial Routes Map](#)

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## IV. CIRCULATION

Traffic circulation in and through the York Neighborhood is on Ellis, Humboldt and James Streets for north/south travelers, and Lakeway and Meador for those going east to west. These routes are currently designated as arterials; however, the James and Humboldt route is not included in the proposed circulation system. Holly, Magnolia and Champion are also arterials carrying traffic to and from the central area and the industrial and recreational opportunities on the waterfront.

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LAKEWAY AND ELLIS SHOULD BE THE PRIMARY ARTERIALS THROUGH THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

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JAMES AND HUMBOLDT STREETS SHOULD NOT BE CLASSIFIED AS ARTERIALS, AND NON-NEIGHBORHOOD RELATED TRAFFIC SHOULD BE DISCOURAGED.

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Neighborhood streets in York are generally 24-feet in width and are expected to remain at this standard. Where major street work is undertaken, the standard should be 28-feet with curbs, gutters and sidewalks.

Intensive development along Lakeway, either offices or higher density residential, could create increased traffic on the north-south neighborhood streets. Unless some separation of traffic is included in development plans, the impact could be disastrous to the maintenance of a strong residential area. Access into, and especially out of, the neighborhood has been facilitated by a traffic control signal at the Ellis/Potter/Magnolia intersection. With major access from the east/west streets at York, Gladstone, Potter and Whatcom Streets, the concept of a "suburb in the city" could be workable if Franklin, Grant and Humboldt were cul-de-saced at the alleys paralleled to Lakeway.

This solution of preventing business related traffic from crossing through the neighborhood is favored by many residents and strongly opposed by others. However, York's history as Bellingham's first suburb lends itself to the further exploration of this concept.

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IF REDEVELOPMENT TAKES PLACE ALONG LAKEWAY, ATTENTION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO TRAFFIC SEPARATION BETWEEN OFFICE AND LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL USES.

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Another potential circulation problem is the possibility of numerous driveways onto Lakeway if the lots are developed individually for small offices. However, to build an office or apartment of an economically feasible size, and to provide off-street parking, will probably require more than one lot. Access should be off the existing side streets--Franklin, Grant and Humboldt--unless the property is combined in even larger parcels and the streets are cul-de-saced. In that case, no more than the existing three curb cuts should be needed.

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IF OFFICE OR HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT TAKES PLACE ALONG LAKEWAY, THERE SHOULD BE NO MORE CURB CUTS THAN THE THREE STREETS CURRENTLY IN PLACE.

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In the Bicycle Facilities Plan, completed in April 1978, bike lanes are called for along Lakeway and Holly Streets. In the longer-range plan, Meador Avenue should have an improved bicycle surface in conjunction with the Whatcom Creek corridor.

If James Street south of Iowa is to be de-emphasized as an arterial, improvements to Meador between James and State Streets will be necessary. These improvements, with signalization at State Street, will complete the connection from Lakeway along Lincoln and Meador into the industrial area, which should decrease congestion problems at the James and Ohio intersection near the freeway off-ramp.

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MEADOR STREET SHOULD BE IMPROVED TO SECONDARY ARTERIAL STANDARDS BETWEEN JAMES AND STATE STREETS.

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### **York Traffic Implementations (YTIs)**

- YTI-1** Use public processes when available to consider possible adverse affects due to increased traffic volumes, potential for cut through traffic or environment contamination from new construction proposals, with intent on preserving the historic character and cohesiveness of the neighborhood, and the health of residents.
- YTI-2** Identify safe pedestrian and bicycle routes, running north to south and east to west, to link the neighborhood internally and externally to destinations and encourage non-motorized transport.
- YTI-3** In consideration of the health and safety of residents living along I-5, a safety/noise wall is desired along I-5 from Lakeway Drive to the southern end of the neighborhood at Abbott Street.
- YTI-4** Improve marked pedestrian crosswalks for visibility and safety, where warranted.
- YTI-5** Consider installation of traffic calming devices (traffic circles, bump outs, speed bumps, etc.) to slow traffic on residential streets within the neighborhood that warrant this intervention if specific criteria are met under Neighborhood Traffic Safety Program procedures.
- YTI-6** Encourage the construction of sidewalks and curbs on blocks where there are none to facilitate pedestrian safety.
- YTI-7** Safety and visibility improvements for high-traffic intersections and alleys throughout the neighborhood should be identified and made, where warranted.
- YTI-8** Consideration should be given for the establishment of Residential Parking Zones (RPZs).

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Click here to view the [York Neighborhood Land Use Map](#)

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## V. SUBAREA DESCRIPTIONS AND LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

The York area is dominated by residential land uses. The older single family neighborhood was to some degree undergoing transition to multiple unit living during the 1960's and 1970's. However, because of the convenient location of the neighborhood, and the affordable price range of the homes, the neighborhood is again becoming a desirable place for families. Because the city is interested in maintaining and conserving housing stock, as well as taking advantage of much of the infrastructure such as streets, sewers, sidewalks, and street lights that are already in place, it is recommended that encouragement of its existing character be promoted and enhanced.

York residents value highly the preservation of the neighborhood's character. To this end, the neighborhood will promote historic designations in Areas 4, 5 and 9. York Neighborhood has a high percentage of intact pre WWII housing stock and like commercial buildings.

Lot sizes are generally about 4,100 square feet, with 1 ½- and 2-story houses, 50 to 60 years old. Although many of the homes were built without foundations, recent years have seen the placement of foundations under large numbers of these existing homes.

The 1970 census identified 940 housing units, excluding the 198 units in Lincoln Square, with 410 owner occupied, 449 renter occupied, and 81 vacant. Information based on City Building Department data totaled 952 units in the neighborhood in 1976, with 15 single-family units having been demolished from 1970 to 1976, and 11 single-family and 16 multiple units constructed from 1970 to 1976.

A complete building condition survey conducted in 1977, counted 735 residential structures with 45 or 6.1% in sound condition, 599 or 81.5% in need of minor repair, 85 or 11.6% in need of major repair, and 6 or .8% dilapidated. The 91 structures in need of major exterior rehabilitation contain 121 units, or 13.1% of the housing.

### Area 1

This area is generally located between Meador Street and Whatcom Creek and is bisected by James Street. Property on the west side of James Street is currently owned by the Bellingham School District (BSD) and is occupied by its bus maintenance and storage facilities. Land on the east side of James Street is largely owned and occupied by an auto dealership, with a smaller parcel at the street intersection occupied with offices.

As ownerships change, the possibility of the City acquiring property along Whatcom Creek should be pursued for open space, trail, park and riparian corridor purposes. At such time, respectively, rezoning the property to allow uses and site designs that are more compatible with the adjacent creek and single family zoning should be considered, such as street front transit oriented development with dedication of public open space adjacent to the creek.

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### **AREA 1 LAND USE DESIGNATION: INDUSTRIAL**

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**Area 2**

Consolidated into Area 11 per Ordinance 2014-09-049

**Area 3**

The Bellingham Housing Authority offices and 198 unit apartment building occupy this site along Whatcom Creek.

**AREA 3 LAND USE DESIGNATION: PUBLIC****Area 4**

Consolidated into Area 11 per Ordinance 2014-09-049

**Area 5**

The residential blocks north and south of Lakeway were rezoned from Residential Multi-Multiple in 2006 in recognition of the area's predominant historic pre-WWI single family character, strong momentum in gentrification, and lack of additional infill potential under the previous zoning. A mix of small multiple unit structures, converted churches, and small storefronts are dispersed throughout the area and add to the character. Lots are small, the streets are narrow (most are 24 feet), and open space is scarce. The zoning for this area should support the existing predominant single-family development pattern. Residents have expressed a desire to adopt design guidelines that would ensure new development, remodels, and rebuilding of nonconforming buildings/uses are designed consistent with the area's historic pre-WWI architecture and pedestrian oriented streets.

**AREA 5 LAND USE DESIGNATION: SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL, HIGH DENSITY****Area 5A**

In 1972, this area became a parking lot to serve the adjacent commercial use on the same property. The western portion of the property is zoned Central Commercial and located in Area 2 of the York Neighborhood. The eastern portion of the property is currently a parking lot and is zoned for residential uses with offices allowed. Commercial development is located immediately north and west of Area 5A. Residentially zoned areas to the south and east are primarily single family with a mix of small multiple unit structures, containing six or fewer units. However, because these lots are so small, the streets are narrow and open space scarce, multiple unit densities should not create a more intensive use than presently exists. The density is 3,000 square feet per unit, with no more than six units in a structure. Multiple unit development at those densities is in keeping with the single-family character of the neighborhood, and is intended to encourage development of rental units suitable for families with children.

Area 5A provides an opportunity for office development. Currently, this area is a parking lot associated with the adjacent medical facility. The special development regulations in the York Neighborhood Zoning section of the Land Use and Development Code shall apply.

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**AREA 5A LAND USE DESIGNATION: MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL, HIGH DENSITY**

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**Area 6**

The strip of land facing Lakeway has become increasingly less desirable for residential use as traffic volumes have mushroomed along this primary arterial. A 1979 planning study, appended to the York Plan, suggests development standards which would minimize the negative impacts of offices on the residential property adjacent to this area. Office development under a Planned Commercial zoning designation will be permitted for this subarea. The small piece of land adjoining the freeway ramp has special access and topographical characteristics that should be considered in the review of new development.

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**AREA 6 LAND USE DESIGNATION: MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL, HIGH DENSITY**

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**Area 7**

The land formerly occupied by Franklin Elementary School has been developed as a multi-use park for all ages and abilities with a multi-purpose lawn area, children's playground equipment, a basketball court, picnic shelter, internal path loop and other amenities. Off-street parking should not be provided at the expense of recreational park space. Street signage should be added as needed to improve vehicular access for disabled, loading and similar purposes.

Unimproved right-of-way within the 1200 block of Franklin Street has been improved largely by neighborhood volunteers in coordination with the Parks Volunteer Program, and informally extends Franklin Park into the neighborhood with natural vegetation, a trail system, benches and signage. These areas could not be managed by the City without the help of the volunteers, and their continued efforts are encouraged. The City should examine the feasibility of vacating the 1200 block of Franklin Street as outlined in the Open Space Chapter herein.

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**AREA 7 LAND USE DESIGNATION: PUBLIC**

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**Area 8**

The Samish Way Urban Village Subarea Plan includes land within the Sehome and York Neighborhoods. Area 8 is the York Neighborhood portion of the Subarea Plan

boundary. The Subarea Plan is a policy document that will guide future development within the Subarea. See Appendix A – Samish Way Urban Village Subarea Plan for details.

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#### **AREA 8 LAND USE DESIGNATION: URBAN VILLAGE**

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##### **Area 9**

The row of lots along the east side of Ellis Street was included in the 1979 planning study by MAKERS, which is Appendix B to the York plan. Although the specific standards suggested for Ellis Street property are not given in detail as part of the land use designators, they provide useful guidance.

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#### **AREA 9 LAND USE DESIGNATION: MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL, HIGH DENSITY**

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##### **Area 10**

Rock Hill Park is named for a series of large sandstone outcroppings that underlie the area. The park was largely created by neighborhood initiative and the labor of countless volunteer hours. Being a small park in a densely developed residential area, additional land acquisition is desirable and parking should be limited. Enhanced public safety opportunities for the park should be explored and could include improvements to natural surveillance and increased use of the park.

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#### **AREA 10 LAND USE DESIGNATION: PUBLIC**

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##### **Area 11**

The Downtown Bellingham Plan includes land within the City Center, Lettered Streets, Sehome, Sunnyland and York Neighborhoods. Area 11 is the York Neighborhood portion of the Plan Boundary. The Plan is intended as a policy document for an overlay zone that will guide future development within the subarea. See the [Downtown Bellingham Plan](#) (Appendix C to the City Center Neighborhood Plan) for details.

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#### **AREA 11 LAND USE DESIGNATION: URBAN VILLAGE**

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Appendix A – Samish Way Urban Village Subarea Plan

**SAMISH WAY URBAN VILLAGE SUBAREA PLAN**  
City of Bellingham, Washington



Planning & Community Development Department  
Adopted by Ordinance No. 2009-11-069  
November 2009

**Appendix B – 1979 MAKERS Study**