



# Cornwall Park Neighborhood Plan

As adopted by Ordinance No. 8868 and amended by Ordinance Nos. 8946, 9200, 9201, 9233, 9301, 9305, 9749, 9787, 9764, 10502 and 10738, 2000-12-094, 2004-12-087, 2004-12-091, 2006-12-118(IMP), 2010-20-057 and 2014-09-046.

**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.

## **CORNWALL PARK NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN**

### **I. NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER**

Cornwall Park Neighborhood derives much of its character and charm from the abundance of recreation areas, open space and the larger well maintained homes. Cornwall and Broadway Parks are two primary recreation areas. Well kept homes with large lawns give the neighborhood a pleasant, quiet, residential atmosphere. One such house, the Roeder Home, is owned and operated by the Whatcom County Parks Department. This home has considerable historic and architectural value and contributes to the neighborhood character. With convenient access to the freeway, and to downtown and outlying commercial areas, a major park, and the absence of high volume arterials within the neighborhood, Cornwall Park retains a stable, pleasant residential character.

The neighborhood encompasses 653 acres. The bulk of the neighborhood is zoned for residential use, supplemental by large areas of industrially and institutionally zoned properties. Overall zoning pattern break down as follows: 324 acres residential, 26 acres commercial, 115 acres industrial, 122 acres institutional, and 94 acres public.

The Planning and Community Development's 1995 Vacant Residential Land Inventory identified 88 total vacant residentially zoned acres with a potential of 322 additional dwelling units. There are currently 1008 dwelling units within the neighborhood (September, 1995).

## **NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN PROPOSALS**

### **II. OPEN SPACE**

Cornwall Park Neighborhood residents are richly blessed with opportunities to enjoy parks and open space thoughtfully provided by previous generations. We commonly equate open space and parks with recreational use. There is a larger concept of open space, however, that encompasses scenic views, a wooded backdrop or a "frame" for an area containing wild plant and animal life. It is this broader definition of open space, which is a valued asset of the Cornwall Park Neighborhood.

Some values associated with maintaining open space are utilitarian in nature. The preservation of natural drainage systems, maintenance of low storm water run-off volumes and the maintenance of steep slopes and wetlands prevent potential threats to public health, safety or property damage for the larger community.

In portions of Cornwall Park Neighborhood, the opportunity still exists to maintain the open space character of the neighborhood while allowing for continued residential development. In some unplatted areas dedication of open space is a required part of development. It is the intent of this plan that, by designating specific open space patterns, a more usable and integrated open space system can be achieved as development continues. The open space patterns follow creeks and steep hillsides, areas inherently unsuited for development. The Squalicum Creek flood plain has

value for recreation and as fish and wildlife habitat. Hillside slopes provide scenic backdrops, which give the community character and can be used as "buffers" between conflicting land uses.

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THE OPEN SPACE PATTERNS IDENTIFIED IN THE OPEN SPACE ELEMENT OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED PRIOR TO, OR CONCURRENT WITH, DEVELOPMENT APPROVALS, TO WIT: ALONG SQUALICUM CREEK AND ASSOCIATED WETLANDS AND FLOODPLAIN, INCLUDING THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE-OWNED BUG LAKE; AND ALONG INTERSTATE 5.

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Because of the extensive existing park holdings available in the neighborhood, only minor additions and improvements to the recreation system are recommended.

IMPROVE AND ENLARGE EXISTING PLAYGROUNDS TO PROVIDE BARRIER-FREE ACCESS AND PRE-SCHOOL PLAY ACTIVITIES.

Existing patterns of use by bicyclists and pedestrians should be enhanced and improved by providing missing sections of sidewalk, planting street trees and similar actions. Opportunities for walking and biking through the neighborhood should be encouraged.

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IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN WALKWAYS ALONG BROADWAY AVENUE AND CORNWALL AVENUE. CREATE A TRAIL AND TRANSIT HUB AT CORNWALL PARK WITH CONNECTIONS TO ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS. INSTALL A PEDESTRIAN UNDERPASS AT SQUALICUM CREEK AND MERIDIAN STREET. DEVELOP THE BAY TO BAKER TRAIL ALONG SQUALICUM CREEK CONSISTENT WITH THE SQUALICUM CREEK TRAIL MASTER PLAN.

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The noise, fumes and visual distraction of high speed traffic on the interstate highway system is disruptive to the character of the adjoining neighborhoods.

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MAINTAIN AND DEVELOP NATIVE LANDSCAPE BUFFERS ALONG INTERSTATE 5 TO MITIGATE ADVERSE IMPACTS OF HIGH SPEED TRAFFIC.

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The Parkview School site is substandard in outdoor play activity space. The school's relationship to Cornwall Park could be enhanced by some improvements in the park.

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ENHANCE THE RELATIONSHIP OF CORNWALL PARK TO PARKVIEW SCHOOL AND DEVELOP THE PARK FOR MULTI USE RECREATION ACCESSIBLE TO SCHOOL CHILDREN.

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### **III. PUBLIC FACILITIES AND UTILITIES**

#### **Storm Water Run-off**

Urban development has a significant effect on the amount, duration, and timing of stormwater run-off. Replacement of natural forest cover with asphalt streets, buildings, and other impervious surfaces can cause a three to tenfold increase in the peak surface run-off. Long, wet winters with no ice or snow and poorly draining soils aggravate drainage problems.

Recent stormwater management requirements for new development (Stormwater Management Ordinance #10633, adopted 1995) employ the use of stormwater detention facilities on site, where appropriate, and attempt to maintain the pre-development flow conditions upon final completion of parcel development. Emphasis is placed on reducing accentuated peak flows via detention. One consequence of this strategy however is the loss of low flows necessary for maintenance of in-stream health, due to the loss of natural absorption, storage and slow release during drier periods.

Another development requirement for stormwater management is the need to provide stormwater quality treatment prior to discharge to natural systems. Stormwater may contain numerous contaminants from urban areas, which may negatively affect natural systems thereby requiring treatment. This is often achieved in the form of bio swales, wet ponds or constructed wetlands.

In light of the above, emphasis is placed on the preservation of natural drainage systems, storage areas and wetlands where possible. These perform the desired stormwater management functions, given that their effectiveness and cost benefit equals or exceeds that of constructed systems.

Development is rapidly encroaching on the natural storm drainage channels and flood plain of Squalicum Creek. The section of Squalicum Creek upstream of Cornwall Park is generally an ill defined, shifting channel over a wide, low, wet area. Development within this reach of the creek must be consistent with the Coastal Zone Management Plan recommendations endorsed by Council Resolution #54-94, which provide for preservation of the floodway and open space element, as well as development options.

Previously, the adoption of a flood study performed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in 1982 brought federal floodplain control to this area. Subsequently, in 1992, further study of this complex flood system was performed by

R.W. Beck and Associates. This flood study found a greater potential for flooding than previously thought and identified some needed improvements in the Squalicum system to minimize flood damage. These improvements should be pursued by the City through capital improvement and/or by the developer when the properties adjacent to the improvement areas are developed. Development in and around the Squalicum Creek Floodplain should also be carefully reviewed for compliance with the Shoreline Master Program (1989) and flood management ordinance. Sensitive areas and their setbacks should be maintained to preserve the natural flood carrying capacity of the system as well as ecological functions.

There are two ponds, Bug Lake and Sunset Pond, within the Squalicum Creek flood plain on either side of Interstate 5. Besides serving as storm water retention areas, these ponds can also serve as recreation areas. Because they are within a flood plain and are meant to serve as retention ponds, any development should be minimal.

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DEVELOPMENT ALONG SQUALICUM CREEK SHOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH THE FINDINGS OF THE R.W. BECK STUDY, COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS, SHORELINE MASTER PROGRAM AND FLOOD MANAGEMENT ORDINANCE. WHERE APPROPRIATE, EASEMENTS SHOULD BE OBTAINED FOR MULTIPLE USE TRAIL AND OPEN SPACE CORRIDORS.

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### **Sanitary Sewer**

There are no known sewer problems in most of Cornwall Park Neighborhood. The area north of Squalicum Creek will need to extend existing sewer when development occurs. Properties along Baker Street have two options for sanitary sewer; extension of the sewer from Meridian Street or a gravity extension of the sewer to Orchard Place.

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Click here to view the [Cornwall Park Arterial Routes](#)

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## IV. CIRCULATION

### **Arterial Circulation**

Circulation in Cornwall Park Neighborhood is indicative of its period of major development: Recent enough to have street widths based on the automobile, but old enough not to reflect contemporary standards for assignment of traffic to neighborhood collectors and arterials.

Meridian Street, on the western boundary of the neighborhood, is a primary arterial, as is Sunset Drive east of James Street. Sunset Drive from James Street to Illinois Street, Illinois west of Sunset Drive, and Cornwall Avenue south of Illinois are secondary arterials. Sunset Drive west of Cornwall Avenue and Broadway Avenue west of Summer are neighborhood collectors (see the Arterial Routes Map).

The street classifications of portions of Sunset and Illinois represent an attempt to reduce the attractiveness of the Sunset to Cornwall access to Bellingham from the northeast. James Street, running parallel to Interstate 5, is the primary arterial south of Sunset Drive. James Street is the primary route to the central business district from the northeast (see Arterial Routes map).

### **Residential Streets**

Within Cornwall Park Neighborhood, a number of streets are improved but not developed to current City standards.

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THERE SHOULD BE A STREET IMPROVEMENT STANDARD OF 28 FOOT WIDTH, CURBS, STORM DRAINAGE, AND SIDEWALKS ON BOTH SIDES.

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### **Bicycle Facilities**

The general purposes of bicycle improvements in Bellingham are to improve conditions on existing streets serving as bicycle commuter routes and to provide a variety of off-street, recreational, and potential commuter routes.

The goal of the program is to provide opportunities for safe cycling on existing streets to serve both the recreational and commuter bicyclists.

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FIVE YEAR FOCUS

1. DEVELOP SQUALICUM CREEK TRAIL EAST FROM CORNWALL PARK THROUGH OPEN SPACE CORRIDOR (SEE PREVIOUS DISCUSSION) AND UNDER FREEWAY AT BRIDGE OVER SQUALICUM CREEK AND MILWAUKEE RAILROAD.
  2. ASSESS THE POSSIBILITY OF AN UNDERPASS AT SQUALICUM CREEK AND MERIDIAN STREET.
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Click here to view the [Cornwall Park Land Use Map](#)

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## V. SUBAREA DESCRIPTIONS AND LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

### Area 1

This area encompasses the lots fronting the east side of Meridian Street, north of Orchard Drive to Interstate 5. The area is fully developed with commercial uses. Development on Meridian Street and the Guide Meridian, as well as increased population north of Bellingham has resulted in increased traffic volumes on Meridian Street. Meridian Street is also designated as a truck route, increasing traffic and noise levels along it.

A local access easement has been provided for those properties between Orchard Drive and Baker Street along the common eastern property line to permit traffic migration from interior lots to Orchard Drive and/or Baker Street.

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

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### Area 2

Area 2 is approximately 16 acres. The area is currently unplatted and comprised of parcels as large as 2 acres. This area should provide a land use transition between the existing commercial uses on Meridian Street and the Light Industrial zoning directly to the east and south of the area.

Uses are generally limited to allow offices, smaller scale light industrial, and hospital related uses which will have minimal impact on the remaining single family uses and the existing commercial uses along Meridian Street. The only commercial/retail uses permitted will be those which are clearly accessory to the primary use, such as a pharmacy.

Screening shall be provided as necessary from remaining adjacent single family uses until such time as the adjacent use is redeveloped for light industrial/institutional purposes. Existing vegetation as well as the addition of tree plantings, fencing or building design may be employed for this purpose as determined by the Planning and Community Development Department.

To address impacts on remaining residential uses from industrial or other allowed uses, site design will need to provide for adequate buffers and screens.

The special zoning regulations listed in the Land Use and Development Code for this area of the Cornwall Park Neighborhood are intended to address the following concerns: a) avoid industrial traffic on streets serving residences, b) provide adequate buffering and development standards to avoid impacts on remaining residences, and c) avoid industrial infrastructure costs for properties remaining in residential use.

There should not be a required minimum yard for those properties abutting the Planned Commercial zoned properties along Meridian Street.

Industrial uses are limited to those identified in the Cornwall Park zoning section of the Land Use and Development Code.

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**AREA 2 LAND USE DESIGNATION:            INDUSTRIAL**

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### **Area 3**

This area lies generally north of Birchwood Avenue, south and west of Interstate 5 and south and east of Areas 1 and 2. Present development consists of medical offices on Birchwood Avenue and a range of limited commercial uses and warehousing uses on Orchard Drive and Orchard Place south of Orchard Drive. Access to Meridian St., Interstate 5, Squalicum Parkway Truck Route and a rail spur make this a good Light Industrial area. Adequate buffering will be needed for the remaining houses and existing commercial uses to the north and west and for Cornwall Park to the south as the area makes the transitions to industrial uses.

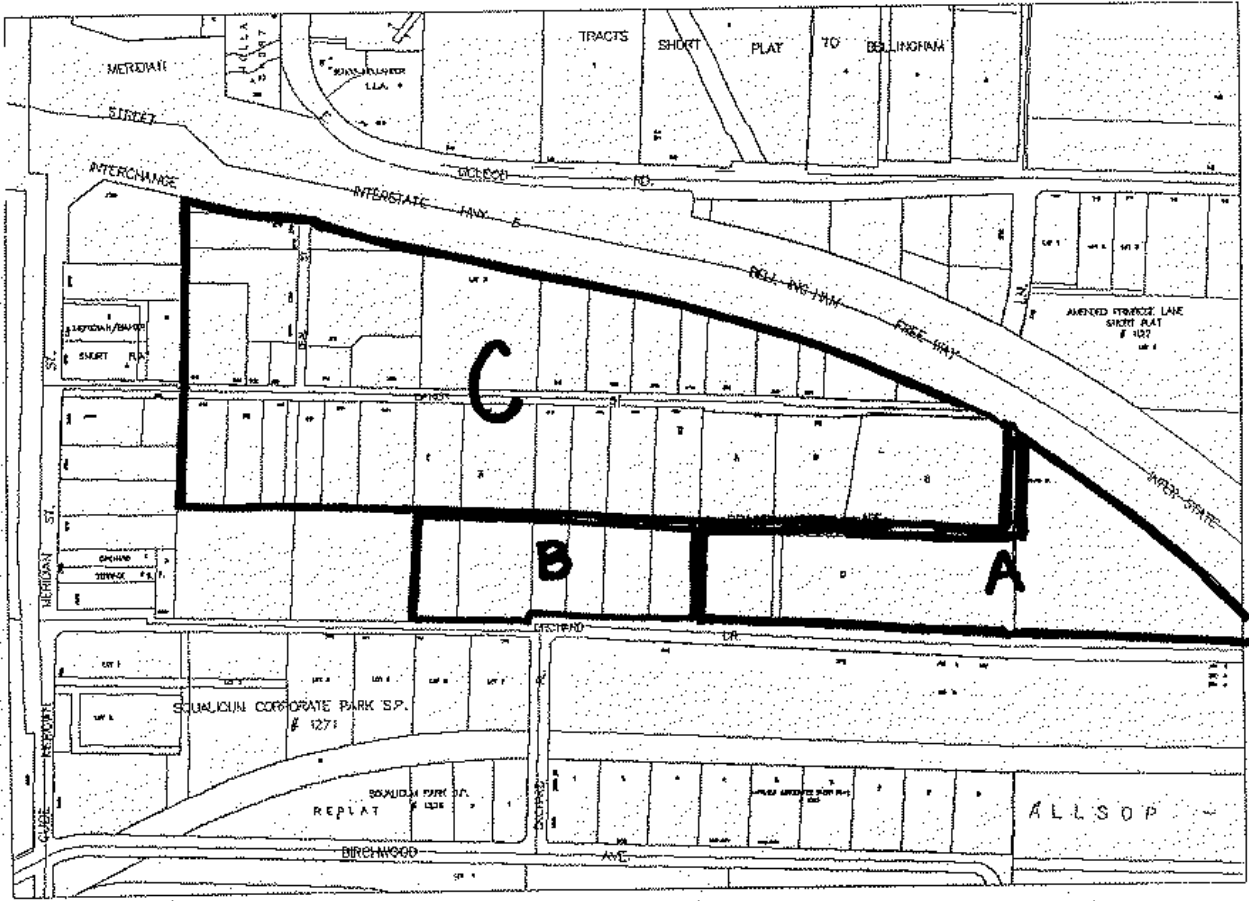
Property located south of the railroad spur and the State Department of Fish and Wildlife pond (Bug Lake) and with access to Birchwood lies within the revised Squalicum Creek floodplain as identified in the 1994 R.W. Beck study. This area should be developed in a manner consistent with the implementation of the 1994 CZM management plan recommendations per City Council Resolution No. 54-94. This area can accommodate a designated floodway, adequate buffering of Bug Lake and appropriate light industrial or medical office uses similar to those existing uses fronting Birchwood Avenue.

Area 3 has been expanded to provide a location for industrial warehousing and distribution, manufacturing, and food processing uses. This expanded area (see Areas A and B, Exhibit Map #1) has explicitly limited uses to prevent erosion of this area's industrial potential by commercial, retail, office, or service uses. A treed buffer of sufficient width to remain structurally stable and provide complete visual screening shall be retained or established as necessary along the freeway corridor. In addition to the wall of trees requirement, screening shall be provided within Area 3 when it abuts Area 2.

Map Areas A, B, and C  
Exhibit Map #1

Exhibit Map # 1

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Screening shall be provided as necessary from remaining adjacent single family uses until such time as the adjacent use is redeveloped for light industrial/institutional purposes. Existing vegetation as well as the addition of tree plantings, fencing or building design may be employed for this purpose as determined by the Planning and Community Development Department.

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PROPERTIES NORTH OF BAKER STREET ARE GENERALLY SMALLER THAN THOSE PROPERTIES SOUTH OF BAKER STREET. LOT CONSOLIDATION IS ENCOURAGED AND WOULD RESULT IN A LARGER, MORE FUNCTIONAL AREA FOR INDUSTRIAL USES.

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The special zoning regulations listed in the Land Use and Development Code for this area of the neighborhood are intended to address the following concerns: a) avoid industrial traffic on streets serving residences, b) provide adequate buffering and development standards to avoid impacts on remaining residences, and c) avoid industrial infrastructure costs for properties remaining in residential use.

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**AREA 3 LAND USE DESIGNATION: INDUSTRIAL**

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#### **Area 4**

This is the lowland area east of Cornwall Park and west of Squalicum Parkway. Present use is agricultural. This area has severe limitations for development in the northern half due to the presence of wetlands, potential flooding impacts, the need to preserve a designated floodway, unstable soils, and desirable use as fish and wildlife habitat along Squalicum Creek. The southern portion slopes upward from the floodplain and is not constrained by environmental limitations.

Individual properties may need to be combined with adjacent properties in order to avoid floodplain impacts, provide required open space and maximize the buildable area. Clustering multiple family development on property not impacted by wetlands or flood hazards allowed shall be encouraged. Future floodplain and floodway management should incorporate a natural greenway and pedestrian corridor along Squalicum Creek from Cornwall Park to Bug Lake.

The City of Bellingham and St. Joseph Hospital are studying, on an area-wide basis, traffic impacts, possible circulation routes and traffic mitigation measures. Any development in Area 4 shall be coordinated with the City approved traffic and circulation study for the Cornwall Park Neighborhood, if such a study has been adopted and implemented by the City at the time of development.

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**AREA 4 LAND USE DESIGNATION: INSTITUTIONAL/MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL, HIGH DENSITY**

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## **Area 5**

The "Borrow Pit" (Bug Lake) excavation by the State Highway Commission during the construction of Interstate 5, now managed by the State Department of Fish and Wildlife, should remain in public ownership and be managed for fish and wildlife habitat and storm water retention. A limited park facility built around use of the pond for fishing should be developed with a spur trail connector to Squalicum Creek Trail.

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### **AREA 5 LAND USE DESIGNATION: PUBLIC**

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## **Area 6**

The existing Cornwall Park encompasses this area. See recommendations under Open Space. Revisions to circulation and other improvements are included in redevelopment plans for the park.

Existing facilities at the park include open play area, tennis courts, basketball court, picnic area, trails, fitness trail, rose garden, and parking area.

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### **AREA 6 LAND USE DESIGNATION: PUBLIC**

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## **Area 7**

This area consists of property owned, developed, and operated by St. Joseph's Hospital, property north of the hospital campus adjacent to Bug Lake and privately owned properties abutting Squalicum Parkway.

At present the hospital campus is nearly built out. Future expansion to the north may be possible if the hospital's present Institutional Plan is revised to incorporate the hill slope north of campus as required open space and buffer. This sloped land and the floodplain valley bottom adjacent to Bug Lake are severely restricted by environmental limitations including wetlands, floodway and steep slopes.

Issues associated with development of a major health care campus, surrounding St. Joseph's Hospital, are significant. A coordinated approval process, rather than approval of individual projects has been developed through the adoption of an Institutional Master Plan. The medical professionals' and the medical consumers' interests are well-served by the Institutional Master Plan mechanism which stresses longer range goals and relies upon forecasts of space needs for utilities, traffic, and institutional uses.

Area 7 is designated as Institutional with a use qualifier of Planned Health Care Campus. Under this proposal, the hospital and the associated property owners have developed a statement of future needs, and commissioned a facilities development plan with building bulk, landscaping, circulation and parking, utilities, and phasing elements.

This document ensures for the City and the health care administrators that individual decisions are made in the larger context of site and time. A thoughtful site design approach in the front end incorporates landscaped buffers, adequate circulation routes, and development sites in a manner that maximizes efficient use and limited capital dollars.

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#### **AREA 7 LAND USE DESIGNATION: INSTITUTIONAL**

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##### **Area 8A**

This area is bounded by Cornwall Park on the north and east, Meridian Street on the west, and E. Illinois Street on the south. It is primarily developed with single family residences, while some lots contain nonconforming accessory dwelling units. There is little remaining development potential.

With Cornwall Park in the back-drop, this area has a serene quality. The area mostly consists of minimum standard residential streets.

Because of the area's proximity to the hospital considerable non-residential vehicular traffic spills onto the minimum standard neighborhood streets. Attempts to reduce the non-residential vehicular traffic should be considered.

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#### **AREA 8A LAND USE DESIGNATION: SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL, MEDIUM DENSITY**

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##### **Area 8B**

This area is located in the southern portion of the neighborhood, primarily around Broadway Park. Parcel size is small relative to other subareas in Area 8. While the area is largely built out, some additional development can occur on existing platted lots.

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#### **AREA 8B LAND USE DESIGNATION: SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL, MEDIUM DENSITY**

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##### **Area 8C**

This area includes those properties adjacent to Plymouth Drive, Sunset Drive, and Coolidge Drive. It is characterized by a quiet, residential streetscape and large functional rear yards. The character of this subarea should be preserved retaining the existing lot pattern.

Because of the area's proximity to the hospital, resident experience considerable non-residential vehicular traffic on minimum standard neighborhood streets. Methods to

reduce non-residential traffic should be considered. Some speculative acquisition of single family residences has been considered by abutting medical offices and institutional uses. Expansion of the non-residential uses in this established residential neighborhood is inappropriate and is not permitted.

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**AREA 8C LAND USE DESIGNATION: SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL, LOW DENSITY**

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**Area 9**

The Fountain District Urban Village Subarea Plan includes land within the Columbia, Cornwall Park and Lettered Streets Neighborhoods. Area 9 is the Cornwall Park Neighborhood portion of the Subarea Plan boundary. The Subarea Plan is a policy document that will guide future development within this subarea. **See Exhibit A – [Fountain District Urban Village Subarea Plan](#)** for details.

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**AREA 9 LAND USE DESIGNATION: URBAN VILLAGE**

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**Area 10**

This area was removed from the Cornwall Park Neighborhood with the adoption of the [Fountain District Urban Village Subarea Plan](#) in October, 2010.

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**AREA 10 LAND USE DESIGNATION: NONE**

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**Areas 11 and 11A**

These areas were removed from the Cornwall Park Neighborhood with the adoption of the [Fountain District Urban Village Subarea Plan](#) in October, 2010.

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**AREAS 11 AND 11A LAND USE DESIGNATION: NONE**

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**Area 12**

This area consists of Broadway Park. The existing facilities are a softball field, basketball court, open play area and horseshoe pits.

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**AREA 12 LAND USE DESIGNATION: PUBLIC**

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**Area 13**

This area includes the Roeder Home and adjacent land and structures owned by Whatcom County Parks.

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**AREA 13 LAND USE DESIGNATION: PUBLIC**

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**Area 14**

This area consists of Bellingham Parkview Elementary School, its play-fields, and bus turn-around area. A bus turn-around design shall be submitted to the City's Public Works Department for review.

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**AREA 14 LAND USE DESIGNATION: PUBLIC**

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To address noise, visual and other safety impacts from the bus turn-around area, the special development regulations in the Cornwall Park zoning section of the Land Use and Development Code for this area shall be required.



**Exhibit A – Fountain District Urban Village Subarea Plan**

**FOUNTAIN DISTRICT URBAN VILLAGE SUBAREA PLAN**  
City of Bellingham, Washington



**Planning & Community Development Department**  
**Adopted by Ordinance No. 2010-10-057**  
**October, 2010**