

Sultan 2044 Comprehensive Plan Update
Existing Conditions Report

2

land use

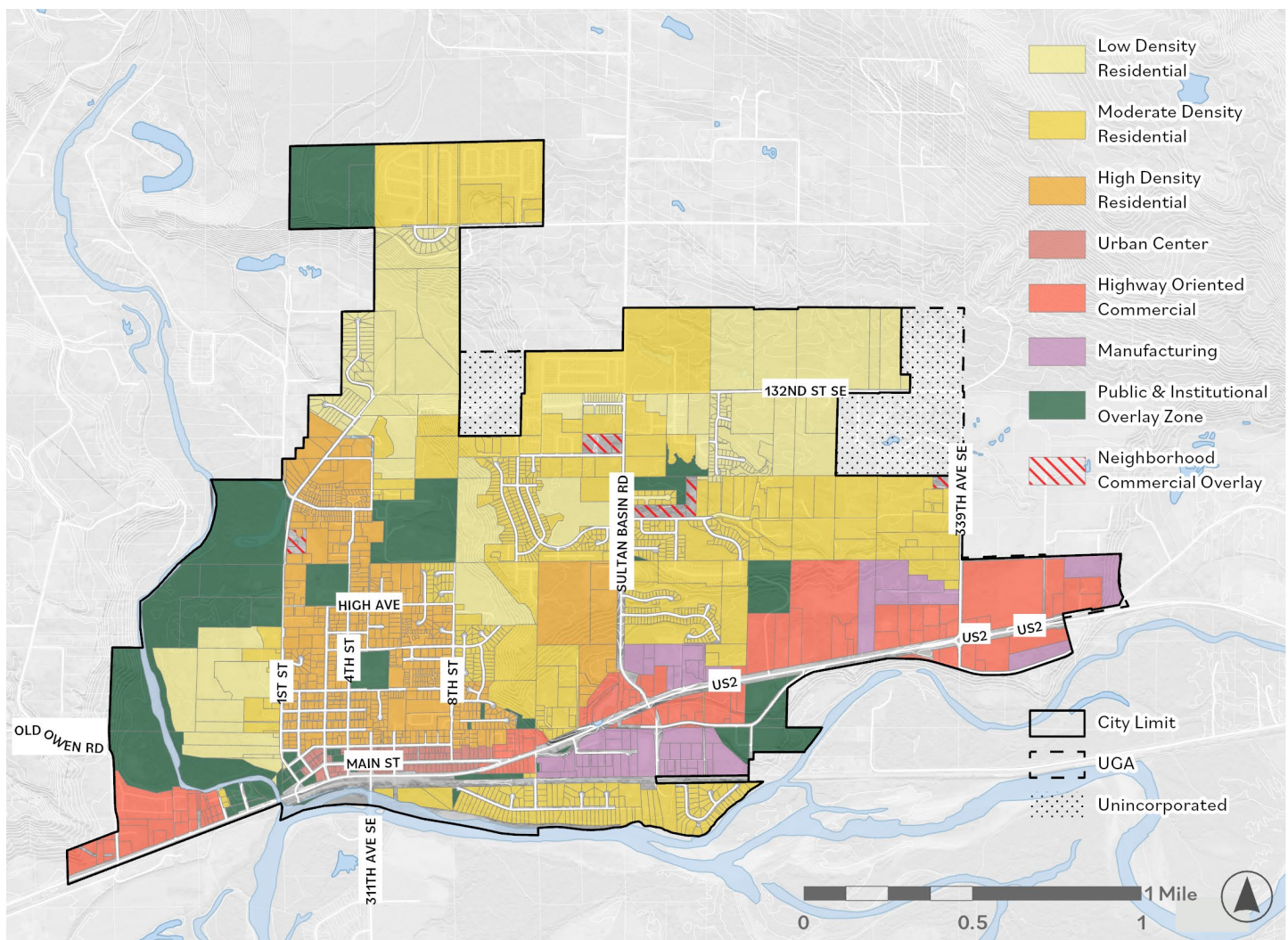


Land Use

2.1 Overview

The land use plan is the foundation of the Comprehensive Plan and informs the other elements of plan. The city must continue to demonstrate that it can provide necessary services to accommodate growth and development anticipated in the land use plan such as parks and open space, capital facilities, and utilities. Other important issues such as housing types and affordability, protection of natural and critical areas, and transportation are directly impacted by the land use plan. Zoning and development standards must be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and directly influence development outcomes to achieve the vision and goals of the Plan. “Existing Future Land Use Map” shows the existing Future Land Use Map which mirrors the zoning map.

Figure 1 Existing Future Land Use Map



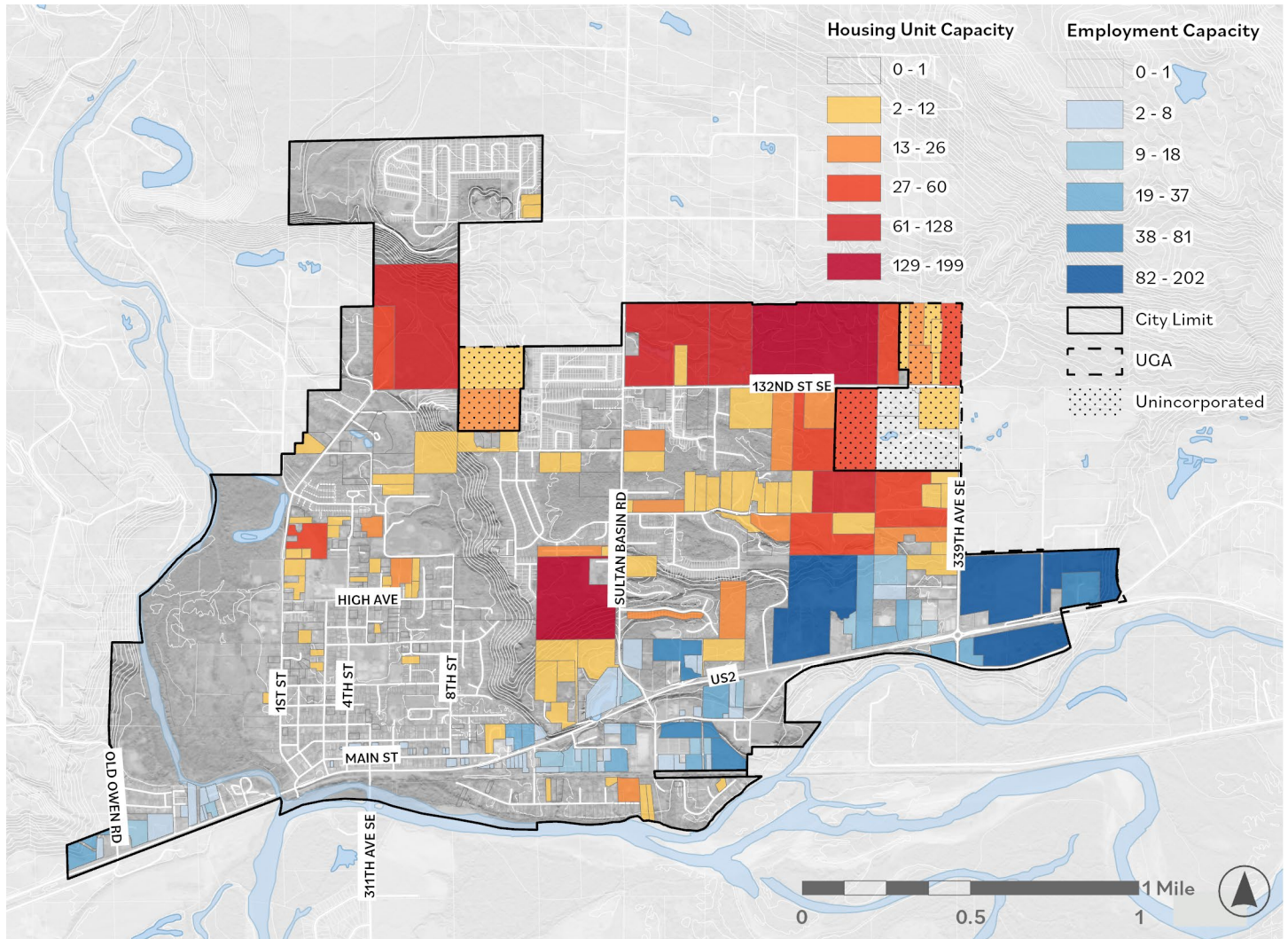
Sultan receives its growth targets for housing and employment from Snohomish County. After participating in the buildable lands process in 2021, Snohomish County issued preliminary growth targets and capacity results for both the City and the UGA (Urban Growth Area), which are depicted in “Growth Targets and Capacity”. “Additional Jobs and Housing Capacity on Vacant or Developable Parcels” illustrates how Sultan's development capacity for new jobs and housing units is distributed throughout the city. Sultan currently has enough capacity to meet its housing targets without the need for additional land use modifications. Therefore, any further adjustments would be driven by community priorities. In contrast, there is a shortage in employment capacity, necessitating land use changes to address this shortfall.

Figure 2 Growth Targets and Capacity

Targets and Capacities	Housing		Employment	
	Sultan City	Sultan UGA	Sultan City	Sultan UGA
Target (2020-2044)	1,425	73	1,329	1
Parcel Capacity (2019)	1,335	193	1,247	0
Initial Capacity Surplus/Deficit	-90	120	-82	-1
Permits (2020-2023)	596	0	n/a	0
Remaining Target	829	73	1,329	1
Parcel Capacity (2023 est.)	975	193	1,247	0
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Snohomish County; Framework, 2021

Figure 3 Additional Jobs and Housing Capacity on Vacant or Developable Parcels



Snohomish County; Framework, 2023

Note: This figure is based on 2021 Buildable Lands Data for Snohomish County. Parcel capacity has been removed based on development that has occurred since the Buildable Lands Data was collected.

2.2 Key Findings

- **Sultan has sufficient parcel capacity for housing but not for employment targets** - Based on Snohomish County buildable lands data compiled in 2021 and local permit data for 2023, Sultan has enough zoned development capacity to absorb county-mandated targets for 902 new homes but will require land use and regulatory changes to accommodate 1,330 new jobs.
- **Single-Family Housing is the predominant land use** - Single-family residential makes up 62 percent of Sultan's existing land uses. This trend is expected to continue given the new permits for single-family residences.
- **Limited opportunities exist for commercial and mixed-use development outside the US-2 corridor and downtown** - Current zoning concentrates non-residential uses along US-2 and in downtown but provides few opportunities for commercial and mixed-use development in Sultan's neighborhoods where most residents live.
- **Outdated land use regulations** - Zoning and development standards should be updated to align with community planning priorities.
- **US-2 remains auto-oriented and lacks non-motorized infrastructure** - Land use and transportation/streetscape improvements should be better aligned along US-2 and Sultan's larger streets like Sultan Basin Road.

2.3 Regulatory Context and Planning Framework

WASHINGTON STATE GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT

The Growth Management Act (GMA) establishes 13 overarching planning goals (RCW 36.70A.020) to guide local jurisdictions in future visioning and in developing plans, regulations, programs, and budgets to implement that vision. The 13 planning goals are summarized below:

- Guide growth in urban areas
- Reduce sprawl
- Encourage an efficient multi-modal transportation system
- Encourage a variety of housing types including affordable housing
- Promote economic development
- Recognize property rights
- Ensure timely and fair permit procedures
- Protect agricultural, forest, and mineral lands

- Retain and enhance open space, protect habitat, and develop parks and recreation facilities
- Protect the environment
- Ensure adequate public facilities and services
- Encourage historic preservation
- Foster citizen participation

The most relevant goals for Sultan’s land use plans include focusing growth in urban areas, reducing sprawl, promoting economic development, and protecting the natural environment.

The land use element is a central part of the Sultan Comprehensive Plan and the implementation of GMA land use element requirements (as per RCW 36.70A.070(1):

A land use element designating the proposed general distribution and general location and extent of the uses of land, where appropriate, for agriculture, timber production, housing, commerce, industry, recreation, open spaces, general aviation airports, public utilities, public facilities, and other land uses. The land use element shall include population densities, building intensities, and estimates of future population growth. The land use element shall provide for protection of the quality and quantity of groundwater used for public water supplies. Wherever possible, the land use element should consider utilizing urban planning approaches that promote physical activity. Where applicable, the land use element shall review drainage, flooding, and stormwater runoff in the area and nearby jurisdictions and provide guidance for corrective actions to mitigate or cleanse those discharges that pollute waters of the state, including Puget Sound or waters entering Puget Sound.

VISION 2050

The Puget Sound Regional Council developed VISION 2050 as a regional framework for growth and multi-county planning policies in alignment with the GMA. VISION 2050 presides over the central Puget Sound region.

Sultan joins 42 “Cities and Towns” under this framework, which are described as:

Cities and Towns provide important housing, jobs, commerce, and services in their downtowns and local centers. The region’s 42 Cities and Towns are expected to accommodate relatively less growth than historical trends and remain relatively stable for the long term (...) Their locally-designated city or town centers provide local job, service, cultural, and housing areas for their communities. These local centers should be identified in local comprehensive plans and become priority areas for future investments and growth at the local level.

VISION 2050 also indicates that “Cities and Towns in Snohomish and Pierce counties are expected to accommodate a relatively higher share of their countywide growth compared to King and Kitsap counties.”

SNOHOMISH COUNTY POLICIES

Countywide planning policies (CPPs) address a range of growth management topics at the county level. Sultan’s land use policies must be consistent with the 2021 CPPs for King County, ratified April 6, 2022. The most relevant CPPs addressing land use are found in the Development Pattern Chapter; however, other notable policies are found in the Environment Chapter and Economic Chapter. A summary of key CPPs is below:

General Framework Policies:

- GF-3 Decisions on land use, transportation, and economic and social infrastructure should consider impacts on climate change and provide solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Solutions should emphasize: a. Integrated planning; b. Adaptive management; c. Efficiency and resiliency; and e. Minimize the need for air quality treatment by minimizing emissions.

Joint Planning Policies:

- JP-4 The County and cities shall develop comprehensive plan policies and development regulations that provide for the orderly transition of unincorporated Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) to incorporated areas in UGAs. Mutual agreements may be utilized to address governance issues and expedite the transition.

Development Pattern Policies:

- DP-5 The County and cities shall adopt comprehensive plans and development regulations (RCW 36.70A.040). In Urban Growth Areas (UGAs), such plans and regulations shall: a. Achieve urban uses and densities; b. Provide for urban governmental services and capital facilities sufficient to accommodate the broad range of needs and uses that will accompany the projected urban growth; and c. Permit the urban growth that is projected to occur in the succeeding twenty-year period (RCW 36.70A.110(2)).
- DP-6 City and County comprehensive plans should locate employment areas and living areas in close proximity in order to maximize transportation choices, minimize vehicle miles traveled, optimize the use of existing and planned transportation systems and capital facilities, and improve the jobs-housing balance.
- DP-11 Consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy and growth targets in Appendix B, the County and cities should encourage higher residential densities and greater employment concentrations in Urban Growth Areas by revising development regulations and incentive programs as appropriate.
- DP-15 The County and cities should adopt policies, development regulations, and design guidelines that allow for infill and redevelopment of underutilized lands and other appropriate areas.
- DP-19 City comprehensive plans should have policies on the annexation of areas within their unincorporated Urban Growth Area and/or Municipal Urban Growth Area.

DP-39 The County and cities should include measures in comprehensive plans, subarea plans, and development regulations that are intended to reduce and mitigate the impacts of displacement on marginalized residents and businesses as a result of development and redevelopment, particularly in regional, countywide, and other urban centers.

DP-41 The County and cities should adopt policies that create opportunities for: a. Supporting urban food production practices, distribution, and marketing such as community gardens and farmers markets; and b. Increasing the local agricultural economy's capacity to produce, market, and distribute fresh and minimally processed foods.

DP-42 The County and cities should conserve designated industrial land for future industries and related jobs by: a. Protecting industrial land from encroachment by incompatible uses and development on adjacent land; b. Discouraging non-industrial uses on industrial land unless such uses support and enhance existing industrial land uses; and c. Discouraging conversion of industrial land to other land use designations unless it can be demonstrated that a specific site is not suitable for industrial uses.

Housing Policies:

HO-14 The county and cities should incentivize and promote the development and preservation of long-term affordable housing through the use of zoning, taxation, and other tools, including height or density bonuses, property tax incentives and parking requirement reductions. The incentives should apply where feasible to encourage affordable housing

Economic Development and Employment Policies:

ED-9 As appropriate, the County and cities should adopt plans, policies, and regulations that preserve designated industrial, commercial, agricultural, and resource land base for long-term regional economic benefit.

ED-11 In cooperation with school districts, other education providers, and each other, jurisdictions should ensure the availability of sufficient land and services for future K-20 school needs, and support high-quality education and job training resources for all residents, such as a 4-year university or technical college in Snohomish County.

Natural Environment and Climate Change Policies:

CC-7 Jurisdictions should consider rising sea level by planning for the siting of new and relocation of existing essential public facilities and hazardous industries to areas that are outside the 500-year floodplain.

LOCAL PLANNING POLICIES

Sultan's existing comprehensive plan, adopted in 2011, includes amendments made in 2015. It sets out the following select goals in response to land use issues and opportunities identified by the public:

- **Goal LU 1** Create an effective land use management process to guide the city's population growth in a manner that endeavors to maintain or improve Sultan's quality of life, and unique

character.

- **Goal LU 2** Coordinate and cooperate with regional jurisdictions and agencies on rural transition areas, essential public facilities, and annexations.
- **Goal LU 3** Establish land use patterns that encourage one or more central places as locations for more compact, mixed-use development. (MPP DP-11)
- **Goal LU 4** Provide active and diverse industrial centers that promote economic growth, provide family wage jobs and meet the 20-year employment growth targets set by Snohomish County Planning Policies.
- **Goal LU 5** Maintain a realistic balance between the land's capability and Sultan's ability to provide urban services.
- **Goal LU 6** Define a pattern of urban development that is recognizable, provides an identity, and reflects Sultan's character, values and opportunities.
- **Goal LU 7** Blend new land uses with the features and characteristics that have come to be valued from past developments of Sultan's manmade environment. (LU 7 was DP 1)
- **Goal LU 8** Create local visual identities and interests, retain natural landscape features, and generally develop a quality urban environment. (LU 8 was DP 2)
- **Goal LU 9** Recognize that the well-being of all Sultan residents is affected by the built environment, land use, density, transportation strategies and street design.
- **Goal LU 10** Support innovative techniques in land use planning to create mixed-use central places and a vibrant sustainable economy which preserves our natural resources.

2.4 History

TRIBE AND EARLY ORIGINS OF THE SETTLEMENT

The history of Sultan traces back to the Skykomish Tribe, who had a permanent village along the confluence of the Sultan and Skykomish rivers. The City's location is historically important to the community, first as a native American village and then as a mining, and eventually, a logging community.

Sultan's inception and a surge in its population occurred when white, non-native settlers drew to the Skykomish Valley after the discovery of Gold in 1869, followed by the unearthing of a lucrative vein in 1878. In 1885, fifty settlers signed a petition to establish a post office for 'Sultan City', and their request was accepted. The name 'Sultan' is an anglicized version of the Chief's name at the time, Tseul-tud, also known as Tseul-Dan.

MINING TO LOGGING & POPULATION CHANGES

With the Great Northern Railway track construction in the 1890s, Sultan City became the site of a railroad supply station, overcoming challenges of the economic Panic of 1893. The city shortened its name to Sultan, and through the success of its newly established Millsite and Improvement Company, enticed new businesses, transitioning from a mining town to a logging town. By 1905, the town's population had grown to about 400, leading to its incorporation as a town of the fourth class.

Sultan's early industries included logging, shingle mills, mining, and a state fish hatchery. The city experienced downsizing in the 1920s due to economic challenges resulting from the increasingly stiff competition within the lumber industry in Snohomish County. In 1920, after an economic collapse due to World War I, the people of Sultan voted in favor of reducing the size of the city. The Population grew from 820 in 1952 to 1,110 in 1970, as the town again expanded its boundaries through a series of annexations. By 1998, Snohomish County was one of the fastest growing counties in the state with new residential and businesses replacing farms and logging operations.

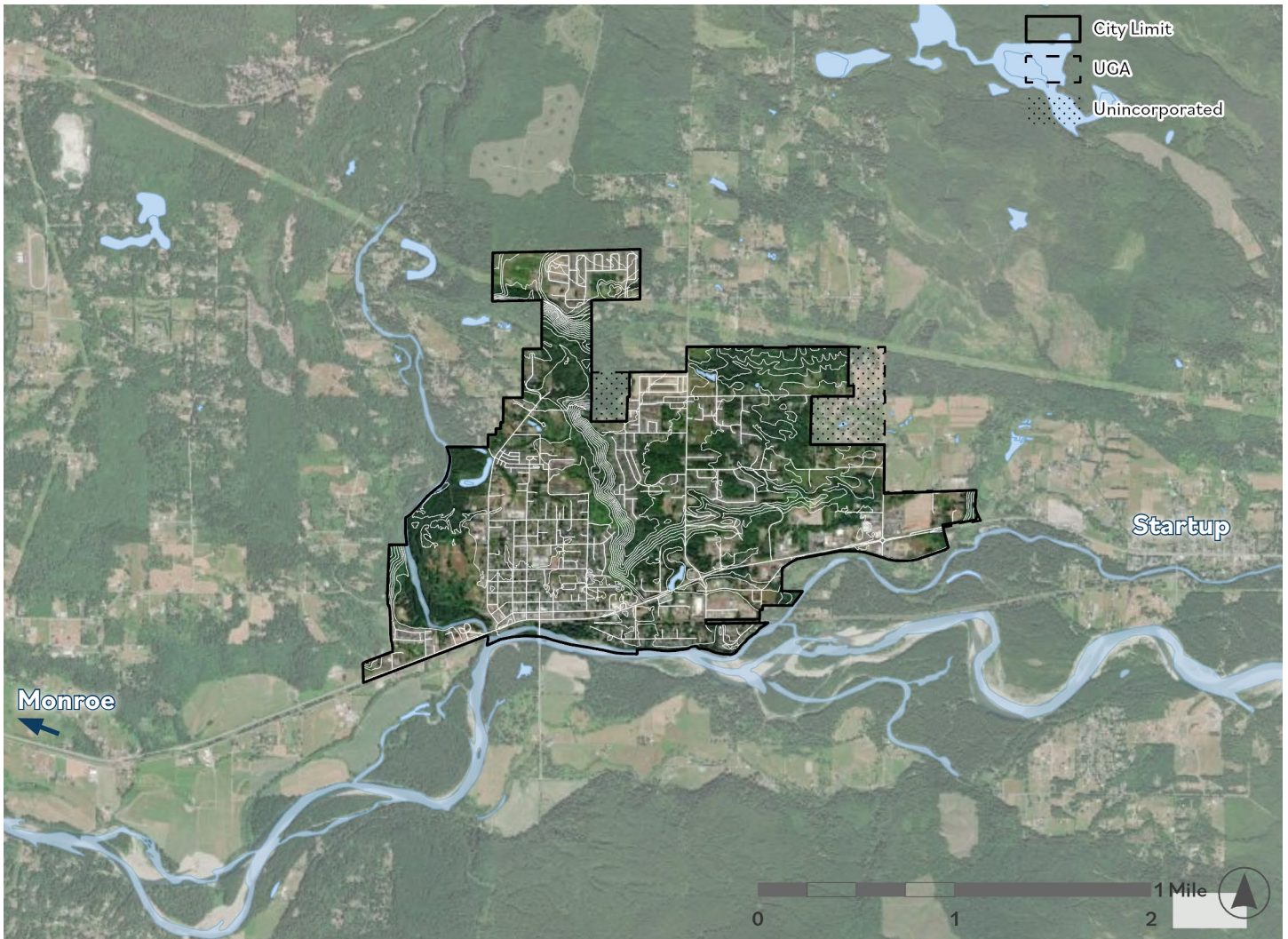
PRESENT INDUSTRIES

A notable event in Sultan's history was the Sky River Rock Festival in 1968, attracting thousands of attendees, though local officials did not plan to repeat the event in subsequent years. In recent times, Sultan has become attractive for outdoor enthusiasts, located near various wilderness areas and experiencing population growth. Sultan's strategic location near Seattle and Stevens Pass, along with being on US-2, has made it into a hub for outdoor enthusiasts, catering to hikers, climbers, boaters, and campers exploring the nearby wilderness areas and national forest.

2.5 Surrounding Land Uses

Sultan is in direct proximity to two cities via US-2: Monroe to the West and Startup (unincorporated) to the East. The immediate area around Sultan is predominantly characterized by green landscapes and various natural features. These include tree-covered areas managed by the Department of Natural Resources on the North, Sultan River and Rudolf Reese Park to the West, Skykomish River and expansive forest to the South, and small agricultural lands on the East.

Figure 4 Regional Area Map



Snohomish County; Framework, 2023

2.6 Existing Land Uses

Sultan’s existing land use pattern is dominated by single-family residential and vacant parcels. Natural resources also make up a sizable portion of the city’s total land area, along with commercial, civic, institutional, and religious uses. Although these categories follow single-family residential parcels in land area, the gap between them and others is substantial.

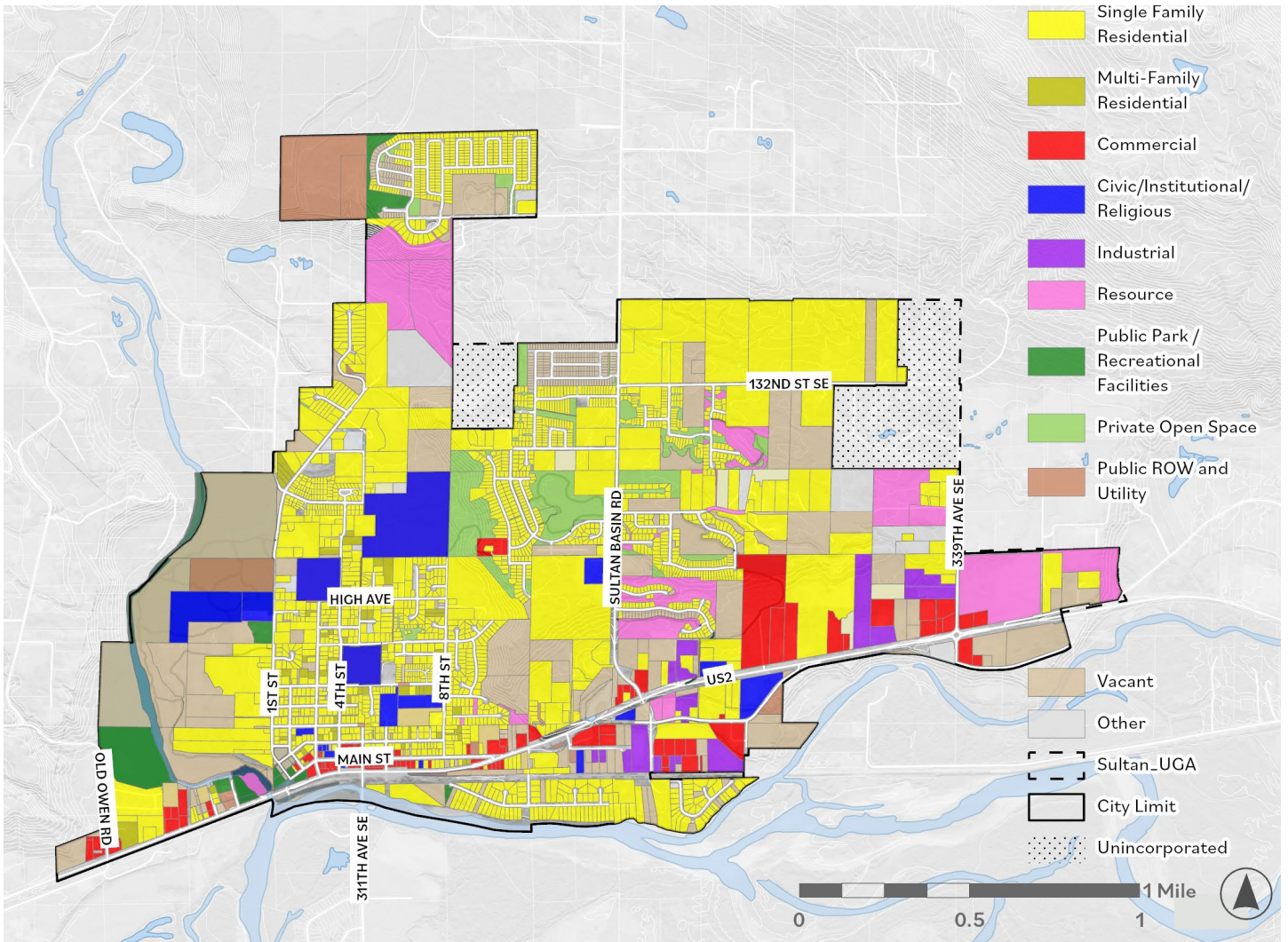
Figure 5 Existing Land Use in Sultan, 2023

General Use Category	Parcel Acres	% Acres
Single-Family Residential	1826.04	62%
Multi-Family Residential	23.19	1%
Private Open Space	71.33	2%
Public Parks, Rec Facilities	32.65	1%
Civic/Institutional/Religious	94.12	3%
Commercial	140.64	5%
Public ROW and Utility	66.59	1%
Industrial	42.79	1%
Resource	138.74	5%
Vacant	420.69	14%
Other	83.34	3%
Total	2940.12	

City of Sultan; Snohomish County; Framework, 2023

Note: This figure sums parcel acres by current land use activities as defined in county assessment data. It includes some parcels identified as ‘street’ or ‘public right-of-way’.

Figure 6 Sultan Existing Land Use Map, 2022



Snohomish County; Framework, 2023

Figure 7 Residential Street in Sultan



Google, 2023

Figure 8 Commercial Buildings on Main Street



Google, 2023

2.7 Existing Land Use Designations

FUTURE LAND USE

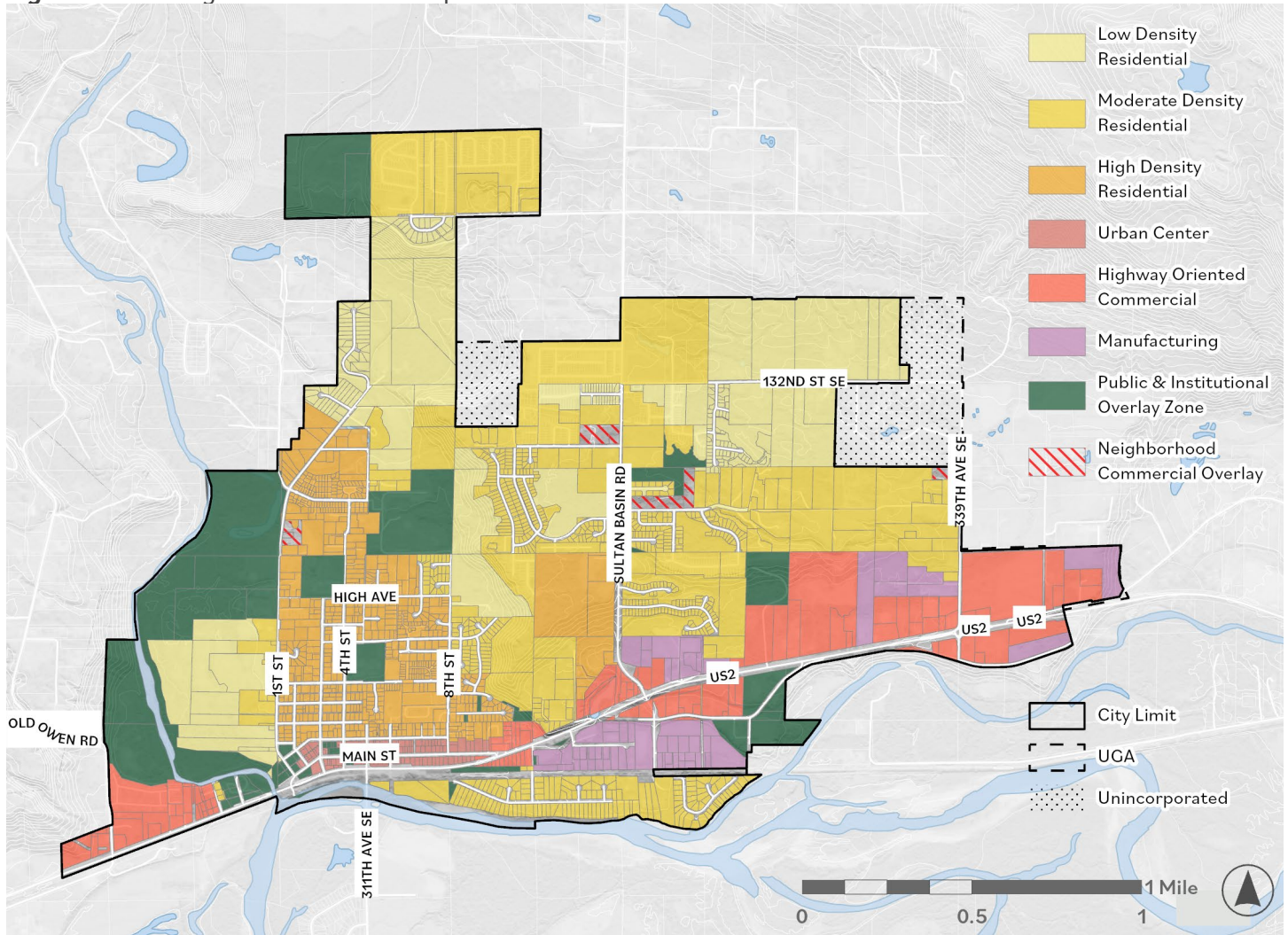
Future land use designations provided in the 2011 comprehensive plan are listed below in “Existing Land Use Designation” and mapped in “Existing Future Land Use Map”0.

Figure 9 Existing Land Use Designation

Land Use Category	Acres	% Acres
Low/Moderate Density	552.52	17%
Moderate Density	736.1	23%
High Density	452.36	14%
Urban Center	17.86	1%
Neighborhood Commercial Overlay	19.4	1%
Public & Institutional Overlay Zone	314.03	10%
Highway Oriented Development	1025.87	32%
Economic Development	107.06	3%
Total	3225.2	

Snohomish County; Framework, 2023

Figure 10 Existing Future Land Use Map



Snohomish County; Framework, 2023

Figure 11 Multi-Family Development



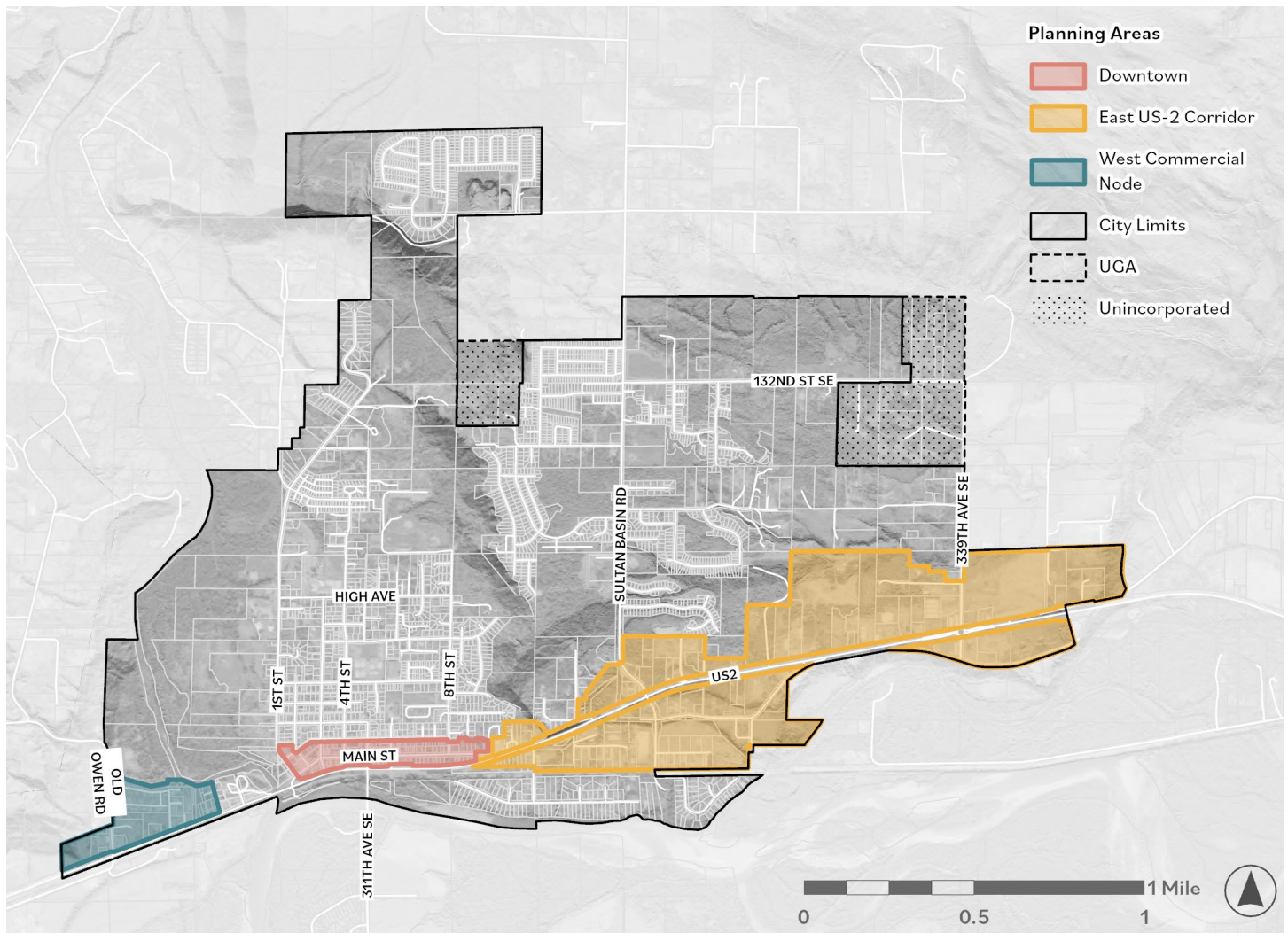
Google, 2023

The planned land use established by the existing future land use map reinforces much of the same pattern of existing uses today, dominated by single-family and multi-family residential. The areas of focus in the existing future land use plan are Sultan’s Urban Center (Downtown) and the US-2 Corridor. The City intends to update its future land use map in the 2024 Update for alignment with growth targets and community land use goals.

AREAS AND DISTRICTS

“Existing Planning Areas” shows the two planning areas identified in Sultan’s existing comprehensive plan: Urban Center (Downtown), and Highway Oriented Commercial (US-2 Corridor).

Figure 12 Existing Planning Areas



Snohomish County; Framework, 2023

Figure 13 Existing Development along Main Street



Google, 2023

Figure 14 Existing Development along US-2



Google, 2023

2.7 Existing Zoning and Development Standards

Sultan's zoning districts mirror what is designated in the existing future land use map. The purpose statements listed below are derived from the Sultan Municipal Code and outline the requirements and intended functions of the existing zoning categories. "Land Development Dimensional Regulations" shows simplified dimensional standards for each district.

- **Low Density Residential (LDR):** To provide for low density (4.5-plus units per acre) residential development of single-family and accessory dwelling units and other uses associated and

accessory to large lot, low density residential development, with development patterns that provide for private yards and larger detached houses.

- **Moderate Density Residential (MDR):** To provide for moderate density (six to nine units per acre) residential development of duplex, zero lot line attached dwelling, single-family and accessory dwelling units and other uses associated and accessory to small yard, moderate density residential development, with development patterns that provide for more affordable detached and duplex housing.
- **High Density Residential (MDR):** To provide for high density (nine to 24 units per acre) residential development of multifamily, two-family and single-family dwelling units and other uses associated with and accessory to common yard, high density residential development, with development patterns that provide for the greatest range of affordable housing options.
- **Neighborhood Commercial (NC):** To provide for convenient location of small-scale commercial uses similar to home occupations and primarily serving local residents, thereby reducing longer vehicular trips and traffic congestion on city streets and encouraging pedestrian and nonmotorized modes of transportation. Neighborhood commercial zones are intrinsically small nodes (less than five acres in size), interspersed within larger residential zones (not closer than one mile from each other).
- **Urban Center (UC):** To provide a mixed-use downtown for high density residential, commercial, office, and other central business district functions supported by a full range of pedestrian-oriented activities and urban services to establish a close-knit urban center.

“Mixed-use” zoning means zoning that permits a combination of typically separated uses within a single development or in close proximity. Mixed use in an urban context refers to usually a single building or complex of buildings with more than one type of activity such as residential and commercial uses taking place within its confines. An example of such a type of development could have retail stores on the ground floor, offices above the ground floor, and residential units above the offices. Other combinations of uses may also occur in a mixed-use setting.

- **Highway-Oriented Commercial (HOC):** To provide a more intensive commercial zone that can accommodate large scale, automobile-oriented activities along Route 2.
- **Manufacturing (M):** To provide for manufacturing and other industrial activities that may have associated adverse environmental impacts such as noise, lighting, odor, vibration, and hazardous waste.
- **Public Buildings, Parks, and Open Spaces (PB/P/OS):** to recognize public places and provide zoning safeguards for properties devoted to public uses and uses that take place in a wide distribution and variety of zones throughout the Sultan community. The zone is applicable to property owned or managed by governmental agencies, special purpose districts, and privately owned open space preservation. This purpose is accomplished by:
 - Providing a zone in which uses serving public needs and critical area preservation may be located with attention to the specific needs of such uses throughout the community.

- Identifying publicly owned and privately owned land uses with special zoning limitations.
- Protecting adjacent properties from potential impacts of public uses, natural hazards, and critical area/open space preservation.
- Placement of this zone on properties owned, managed, used, or intended to be used by public agencies such as schools, government facilities, social services, hospitals, libraries, special purpose districts, etc.

Figure 15 Land Development Dimensional Regulations

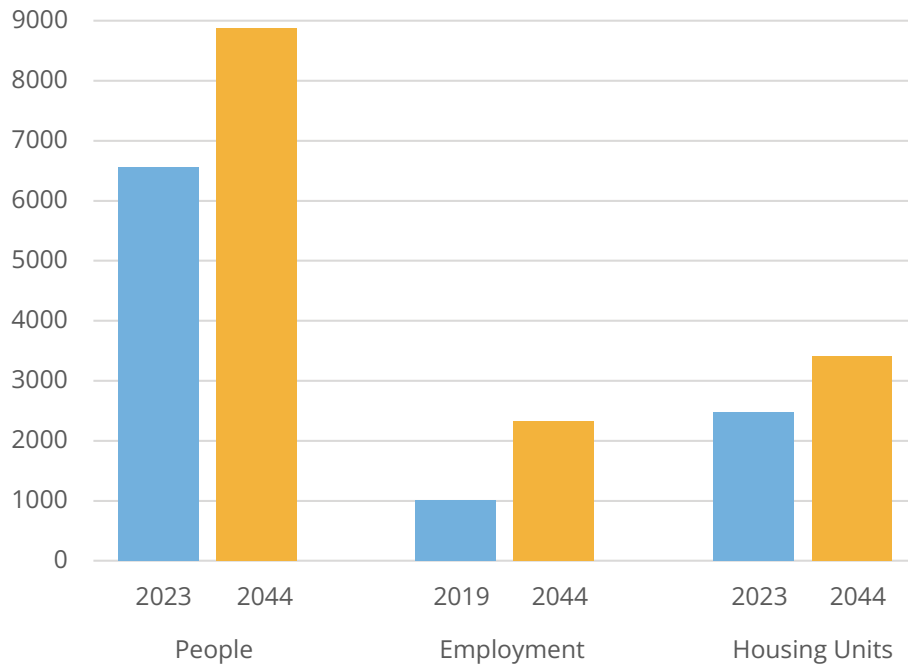
Standards	LDR	MDR	HDR	NC	UC	HOC	M	PB/P/OS
Maximum Density (units/acre)	5	8 - 10	10 - 24	10 - 24	10 - 24	24	N/A	N/A
Minimum Lot Area (sqft)	8,600	4,500	3,600	5,000	5,000	8,000	10,000	10,000
For an Accessory Dwelling Unit	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
For a Duplex	N/A	10,000	6,000	6,000	7,000	N/A	N/A	N/A
For a Multi-Family Dwelling	N/A	N/A	8,000	8,000	8,000	8,000	N/A	N/A
Minimum Lot Width	70 ft.	50 ft.	40 ft.	50 ft.	40 ft.	50 ft.	70 ft.	75 ft.
Maximum Lot Coverage	50%	60%	60%	60%	80%	85%	85%	60%
Maximum Building Height	30 ft.	30 ft.	30 ft.	30 ft.	30 ft.	30 ft.	50 ft.	50 ft.

City of Sultan; Framework, 2023

2.8 Current and Future Population, Housing, and Jobs

Sultan had a population of 6,730 people as of 2023 and is expected to grow by 68.5% or 3,526 persons by 2044, as shown in “Estimated Population, Housing, and Jobs; 2020 and 2044”. It also depicts the estimated local growth in housing units and employment for both Sultan and the presently unincorporated areas of Sultan’s Urban Growth Area. Estimates for local growth in dwelling units and households are made by assuming unit production tracks population growth and slight decrease in household size (2.5 people per household is assumed for 2044 versus 2.61 people in 2020, which tracks with historical and forecast trends). Estimated job growth is based on county population projections and carries forward the 2020 ratio of 0.25 jobs for every person. A market demand study was not conducted; these figures are rough estimates.

Figure 16 Estimated Population, Housing, and Jobs; 2020 and 2044



WA Office of Financial Management; PSRC; City of Sultan; Framework, 2023

Sultan’s 2044 growth targets, established by Snohomish County, are listed in “Sultan Growth Targets and Capacities for Housing and Jobs; 2020-2044”⁷. The City is required to accommodate its share of regional growth by developing comprehensive plan policies and by adjusting its development capacity through zoning changes.

Figure 17 Sultan Growth Targets and Capacities for Housing and Jobs; 2020-2044

Targets and Capacities	Housing		Employment	
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Target (2020-2044)	1,425	73	1,329	1
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Snohomish County; Framework, 2023

2.9 Summary of Land Use Conditions and Trends

Housing and employment targets set by Snohomish County will heavily influence the future of land use in Sultan. Housing growth targets for 2044 are attainable based on existing capacity; however, some land use and zoning changes will need to be made to accommodate the affordable housing allocation—which disaggregates the growth target by income band—once it is finalized by Snohomish County. Minor zoning tweaks are also expected to address the deficit in parcel capacity to meet the 2044 employment targets.