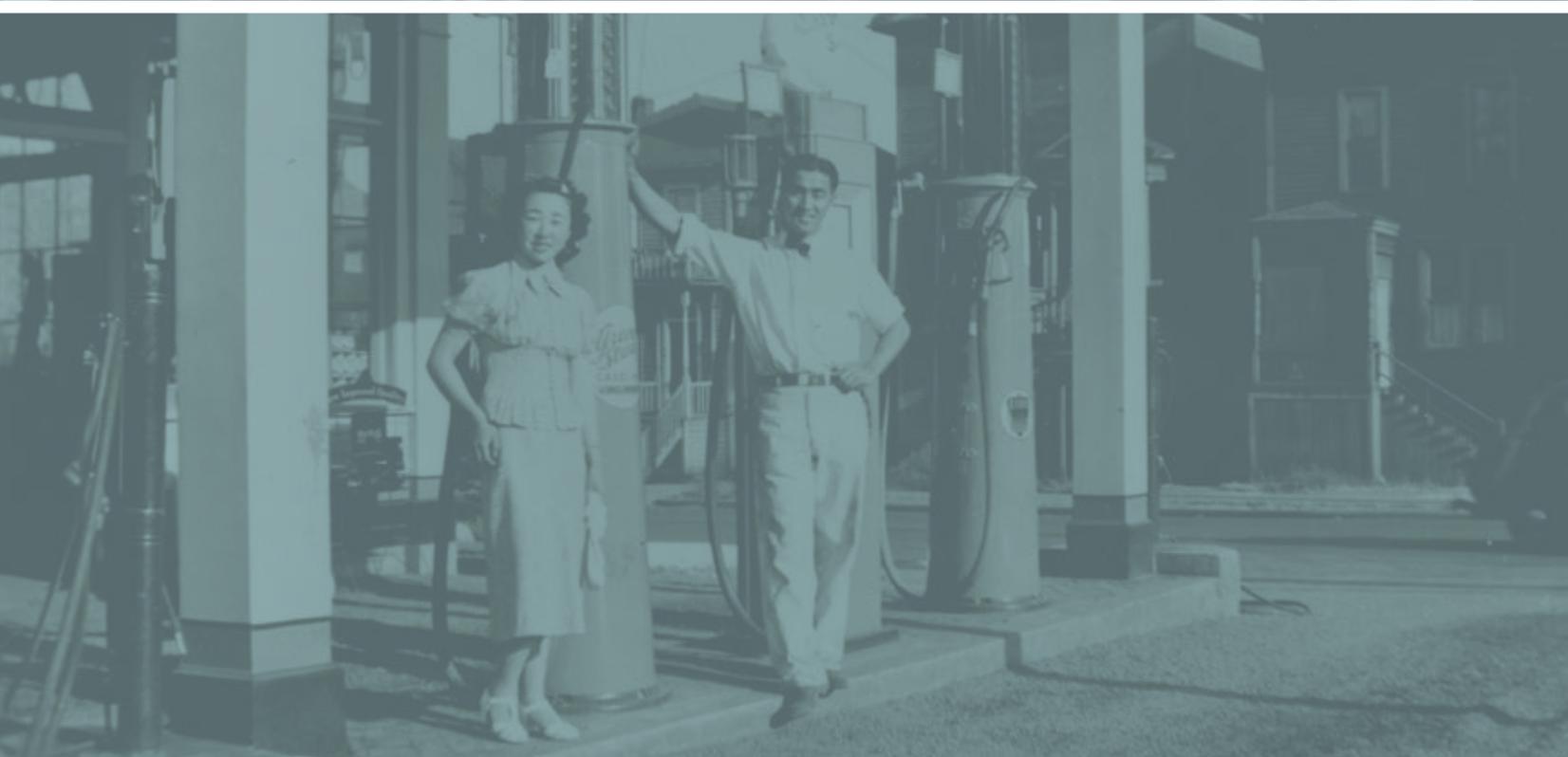


PRIVATE UTILITIES ELEMENT



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VOLUME 4

PRIVATE UTILITIES ELEMENT

VISION

Private utilities in Auburn are planned, designed, and constructed in a manner that adequately supports the future growth scenarios predicted in the City's Land Use Element and that meets the needs of residents, visitors, and businesses. Sustainability is a principle that guides decisions for where utilities are placed, how they are constructed, how they are operated and maintained, and how all aspects of design, construction, and operation are funded.

CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Electricity and Natural Gas

Puget Sound Energy provides electrical and natural gas service to the City of Auburn and its potential annexation area. PSE is an investor-owned private utility that provides service to approximately 1.2 million customers in a service area that covers 6,000 square miles.

Electricity

PSE builds, operates, and maintains an electrical system consisting of generation, transmission, and distribution facilities. Facility technology for electricity transmission may change in the future in order to respond to the need for more efficient facilities, address various electromagnetic field and health concerns, and diversify resources. Utility policies should be updated in the future to consider changes in technology, facilities, and services.

Natural Gas

The Northwest Pipeline Corporation and Enumclaw Natural Gas also have gas lines in the southeastern portion of the City. Northwest

Pipeline Corporation's only customer in Auburn is Enumclaw Natural Gas. Enumclaw Natural Gas serves Auburn residential customers in the area of the Auburn Adventist Academy.

Telecommunications

Telecommunications includes a wide range of services including conventional telephone, cellular telephone, and cable television. Telecommunications technology continues to change rapidly.

Conventional Telephone

Conventional local telephone service to the City is provided by CenturyLink. CenturyLink is a global provider of telecommunications services.

Calls are switched at facilities called central offices. Typically, four main lines leave each central office – one in each direction. Auburn's central office is located in downtown Auburn.

Several carriers provide long distance service to the area. These providers have underground fiber-optic cables passing through the City of Auburn.

Cellular Telephone

Cellular telecommunications provide mobile telephone communications via radios that send and receive signals from a network of receivers mounted on utility poles, towers, buildings, or other structures on private property or within a right-of-way. Cellular communication companies offer digital voice, messaging, and high-speed wireless data services to customers.

Cellular telephone service within the City, its potential annexation areas, and the Puget Sound region overall is provided by multiple private

companies. Cellular providers are regulated by the Federal Communications Commission. Technology and business practices in the area of telecommunications continue to change rapidly.

Cable Television

Cable television service is provided by Comcast through a combination of aerial and underground cables. The locations of existing and planned cable lines are shown on Map 6.4.

INTRODUCTION

The Growth Management Act requires the City of Auburn to include a Private Utilities Element within its Comprehensive Plan. The element should provide a framework for the efficient and predictable provision and siting of utility facilities and services within the City, consistent with each serving utility’s public service obligations. This element covers private utilities (those not provided by the City of Auburn), and includes electricity, telecommunications, and natural gas. City-owned water, sewer, and stormwater utilities are described within the Capital Facilities Element (Chapter 3) of this Comprehensive Plan.

Investor-owned utilities in the state of Washington are regulated by the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission. State law regulates the rates, charges, services facilities, and practices of utilities. Any changes in policies of these aspects of utility provision require WUTC approval.

The primary responsibility for the planning of private utilities rests with utility providers. Clearly, however, planning cannot take place without open lines of communication between the City and utility providers. The City acknowledges that some private utility providers are not willing to provide capacity or future construction plans, as some of this information may affect their competitiveness or be considered proprietary. Private utilities, however, must recognize that not providing relevant information may hinder the City’s ability to assist them in their projects.

VALUES

Character: Private utilities will provide a positive contribution to the quality, aesthetics, and functionality of the community.

Wellness: Utility infrastructure and systems support the delivery of safe and efficient electricity, gas, and telecommunications.

Service: Utility infrastructure and systems support the City’s goals of providing accessible and transparent government services and processes.

Economy: Businesses are served by utility infrastructure meeting or exceeding the needs for market entry and future growth.

Celebration: Telecommunication systems are fully utilized to reach a broader cross-section of the community in a way that brings people together for civic activities, cultural events, and social awareness.

Environment: Siting, installation, and maintenance of utilities will ensure protection, preservation, and respect of the wildlife habitat, water quality, and environmentally sensitive features.

Sustainability: When designing, constructing, and maintaining utilities, a long-term investment horizon is favored over concepts that only provide short-term benefits and outcomes.

PLANNING APPROACH

Objectives and Policies

Objective 1.1. To allow the development of private utilities to meet the needs of the existing community and provide for its planned growth consistent with serving utilities’ public service obligations.

Policies

- PU-1 Private utility companies are recognized as providers of important services necessary for maintaining current and future lifestyles.
- PU-2 Private utility providers should refer to the City’s Comprehensive Plan Map for guidance regarding future land uses and intensities. Private utility facilities and systems should be consistent with the uses and densities allowed by the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code. The City will regularly provide this information, and information on pending development proposals (both public and private), to the appropriate provider. In return, the City expects a cooperative posture toward coordinated and sensitive expansion of infrastructure.

PU-3 Private utility companies should strive to provide utility services to all segments of the Auburn population and areas of the community.

Objective 1.2. To improve the safety, visual quality, and efficiency of private utility facilities consistent with the serving utilities' public service obligations.

Policies

PU-4 The City shall require that new private utility distribution, service, and telecommunication lines be located underground within all new developments. The City will also work with utility companies to relocate existing distribution, service, and telecommunication lines underground as a part of new development whenever it is technologically feasible, and as part of City capital roadway projects whenever it is economically and technologically feasible. Expansions and upgrades completed by private utilities will be required to be underground unless they meet appropriate exemptions.

PU-5 Common utility trenches should be encouraged and coordinated by both private and public providers whenever possible.

PU-6 To reduce visual clutter, antennas, relay mechanisms, and similar structures should be located on existing poles, structures, or buildings whenever possible. When deemed feasible and necessary

to minimize impacts on adjacent uses or views by the City, visual screening may be required.

PU-7 The City shall consider the environmental impacts of proposed utility facilities as a part of its environmental review process. When requested by the City, the utility provider shall furnish documentation of current research results and/or provide additional information related to determination of the potential environmental impacts, if any, from the proposed facilities.

PU-8 Construction of facilities and provision of services by private utility providers within the City of Auburn shall be in compliance with all of the goals and policies of this Comprehensive Plan.

PU-9 Decisions regarding private utility facilities within Auburn should consider the safe, adequate, and efficient availability of these utilities to other jurisdictions.

PU-10 The location of utility facilities is often dependent upon the physical requirements of the utility system. All utility facilities should be sited, designed, and buffered (through extensive screening and/or landscaping) to fit in with their surroundings harmoniously and safely. When sited within or adjacent to residential areas, special attention should be given to minimizing noise, light, and glare impacts.

