

CITY OF RUSTON WASHINGTON

Comprehensive Plan



2025



Our vision for a healthy,
sustainable, community.



Table of Contents-

Chapter 1 – Introduction Participation & Future Vision	7
RUSTON HISTORY	8
RUSTON TODAY	10
WHAT IS COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING?	12
WHY PLAN?	13
REGIONAL PLANNING	15
CONSISTENCY, SUSTAINABILITY, & CONCURRENCY	17
LOCAL PLANNING IN RUSTON	17
AMENDMENTS AND IMPLEMENTATION	18
WHO PARTICIPATES?	19
FUTURE VISION	20
VISION STATEMENT	21
Chapter 2: Community Character	22
INTRODUCTION	23
EXISTING CONDITIONS	23
FUTURE VISION	24
GOALS AND POLICIES	25
POLICY CONNECTIONS	30
Chapter 3: Land Use	31
INTRODUCTION	32
Growth Management and VISION 2050	33
EXISTING LAND USE	33
General Land Uses and Zoning	33
Utility Services	36

Schools.....	36
Recreation, Emergency, and Other City Services.....	36
GROWTH POTENTIAL.....	37
Growth Accommodation	37
Buildable Lands Analysis Summary	38
Housing Capacity	40
Population Projections.....	40
Employment Projections.....	41
FUTURE VISION	42
GOALS AND POLICIES	43
POLICY CONNECTIONS	50
Chapter 4: Housing	52
INTRODUCTION	53
Housing and VISION 2050	53
Recent Housing Legislation	54
HOUSING INVENTORY AND FORECAST.....	55
Existing Housing Inventory and Analysis.....	55
Housing Equity Report	58
Displacement Risk Assessment.....	59
Housing Needs and Opportunities	60
FUTURE HOUSING TARGETS.....	63
Accommodating Housing Growth	64
Housing Affordability Tools	66
FUTURE VISION	67
GOALS AND POLICIES	68
POLICY CONNECTIONS	73

Chapter 5: Economic Vitality	74
INTRODUCTION	75
FUTURE VISION	76
GOALS AND POLICIES	76
POLICY CONNECTIONS	81
Chapter 6: Transportation	82
INTRODUCTION	83
Growth Management Act Requirements	83
Land Use Assumptions	86
EXISTING TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES	87
Historical Background	88
Thoroughfare Network	88
Transit Facilities and Services	93
Railroad	95
Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities	95
RUSTON TRANSPORTATION NETWORK STANDARDS	99
Thoroughfare Typologies and Standards	99
Alleys	107
Complete Streets Design	111
General Thoroughfare Streetscape Standards	114
LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS	120
Level of Service Requirement	120
Why This Approach Matters	121
Thoroughfare Performance Measures	121
Level of Service Standards for State and Regional Facilities	124
FUTURE TRANSPORTATION NEEDS	124

Traffic Forecast	124
Future Demand	126
Transportation System Expansion Needs	127
FUNDING NEEDS AND SOURCES	129
Specific Actions for Facilities below MMLOS Standards	130
FUTURE VISION	130
GOALS AND POLICIES	131
POLICY CONNECTIONS	137
Chapter 7: Utilities	139
INTRODUCTION	140
EXISTING UTILITIES AND CONDITIONS	140
Electricity	140
Sanitary Sewer	141
Stormwater	142
Natural Gas	142
Water	142
Solid Waste	143
Telecommunications	144
FUTURE VISION	144
GOALS AND POLICIES	144
POLICY CONNECTIONS	148
Chapter 8: Capital Facilities	149
INTRODUCTION	150
CAPITAL FACILITIES INVENTORY AND FORECAST	150
Civic Life	152
Ruston School Building & General City Services	153

Police, Fire, and Medical Aid.....	154
Parks, Recreation & Open Space.....	154
Complete Streets	154
Electricity, Sanitary Sewer, Stormwater, Solid Waste & Recycling.....	155
Public Education.....	155
CRITERIA AND CONSIDERATIONS	157
FUNDING	158
FUTURE VISION.....	159
GOALS AND POLICIES	160
POLICY CONNECTIONS	163
Chapter 9: Shoreline	165

CITY OF RUSTON WASHINGTON

Chapter 1

Introduction

Participation &

Future Vision



RUSTON HISTORY

From its inception in 1880, Ruston has embodied an independent spirit of ambition and resilience. Nestled along the shores of Commencement Bay, the town quickly grew around what would become the largest copper smelter on the West Coast. Ruston's early development as a company town was shaped by the needs of the smelting industry, which not only provided livelihoods for its hardworking residents but also laid the foundation for a thriving community. Families moved in, housing, shops, and a schoolhouse were built, and a community was born.

Dennis Ryan of St. Paul, Minnesota, envisioned Ruston as a key player in processing ore from the Coeur d'Alene and Alaska mines. In 1889, he enlisted William Ross Rust, an experienced ore buyer from Aspen, Colorado, to manage the newly built smelter. Recognizing its potential, Rust later purchased the smelter and named it the Tacoma Smelting and Refining Company. By 1902, the smelter had transitioned from lead to copper processing, with the installation of an electrolytic converter—one of the most innovative of its kind in America. In 1905, Rust sold the smelter to Daniel Guggenheim and John P. Morgan, though he continued to manage it under the American Smelting and Refining Company (ASARCO).

Rust remained committed to the community, and in 1906, he led Ruston's residents in a vote to incorporate, formally establishing Ruston as an independent town, separate from the rapidly expanding Tacoma. In addition to municipal independence, Ruston remained physically isolated by two miles of undeveloped land, with ASARCO

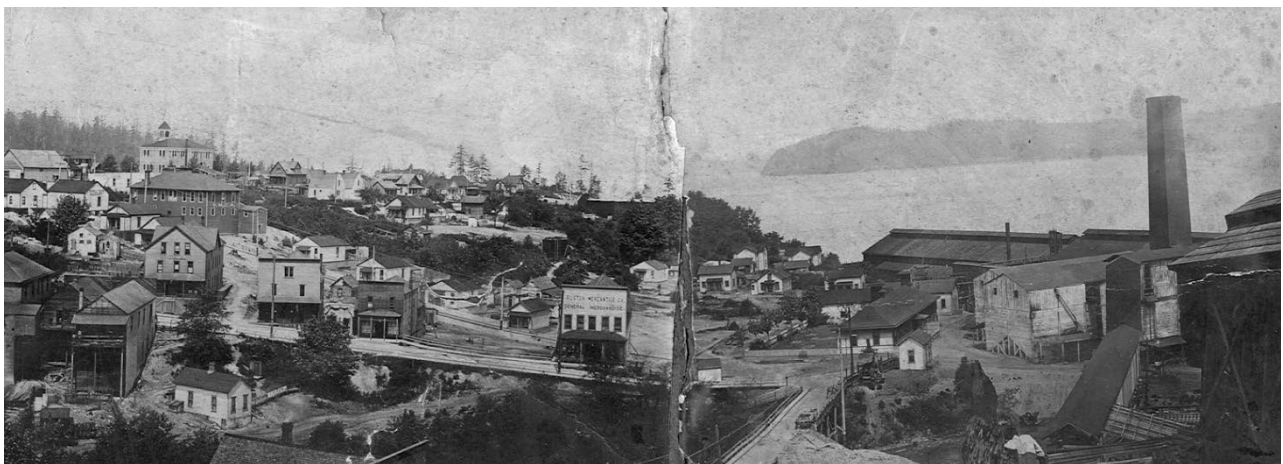


Figure 11 -Historic Ruston with homes, stores, smelter and the original schoolhouse on the hill

providing essential city services, including a company store, boarding houses, and the Smeltermen's Club House—a recreation facility for workers.

Between 1913 and 1917, ASARCO expanded its operations, building a second, taller smokestack that stood at 571 feet—the tallest of its kind worldwide until an earthquake damaged it in 1917. The expansion of the Northern Pacific Railroad's mainline along the shoreline, including the Nelson Bennett tunnel, played a crucial



Figure 22 - Historic aerial photo of the ASARCO Smelter

role in connecting Ruston to Tacoma and aiding in ASARCO's growth. The isolation of Ruston diminished as Tacoma grew westward, eventually merging the boundaries of the two communities.

RUSTON TODAY

Situated along Commencement Bay and bordered by Tacoma on three sides, Ruston is a hidden gem. The City of Ruston exemplifies small-town America with its quaint and vibrant character. Steeped in pre-Washington State history, Ruston has deep roots, with families that have lived there for generations, including the Puyallup Indian Tribe, who historically inhabited the Commencement Bay area and used its shores for fishing.

From its origins as a camp along the bay, Ruston grew into a town centered around the smelting industry and has since evolved into a self-sustaining city. With a 2020 population of 1,055 (US Census) and estimated 2024 population of 1065(WA Office of Financial Management) Ruston is primarily a residential community, complemented by two commercial cores.



Figure 33 – New mixed-use development on the old ASARCO site



Figure 44 - Pearl District

Charming neighborhoods feature arts and crafts-style homes with porches lining traditionally scored sidewalks. Spectacular scenic views of Puget Sound and the Olympic Mountain Range are abundant from residential areas, commercial zones, and nearby parks such as Point Defiance and Dune Peninsula. Ruston residents enjoy ample open spaces, including parks, plazas, trails, and a community center, along with dedicated police and fire departments. The city hosts civic buildings, parkland, public gathering spaces, and community events such as celebrations, festivals, and block parties.

The land naturally slopes down to the shores of Commencement Bay, where new residential and commercial developments are taking shape. This area, once the site of ASARCO operations, has undergone cleanup as a federal Superfund site and is now being transformed into a mixed-use community with multifamily housing, commercial spaces, and recreational opportunities.

WHAT IS COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING?

Ruston's Comprehensive Plan shapes growth and guides decision-making by providing a clear vision, goals, and policies for the community. Each element of the plan serves as a roadmap for a sustainable future, encouraging residents to look 20 years ahead to protect and enhance the high quality of life that Ruston enjoys.

The Plan reflects Ruston's long-term values and aspirations, guiding both physical development and the preservation of community character. It addresses key areas such as land use, housing, capital facilities, utilities, and transportation to achieve the city's vision, while regulations and other tools help ensure this vision becomes reality.

In accordance with the [Growth Management Act \(GMA\)](#)¹, Ruston's Comprehensive Plan includes the required elements of land use, housing, capital facilities, economic development, transportation, and utilities. Optional or non-funded elements include parks and recreation, climate change resiliency, solar energy, conservation, historic preservation, and subarea plans.



Figure 55 - Ruston Shoreline from Dune Peninsula Park

¹ Washington State Department of Commerce. "Periodic Update."
<https://www.commerce.wa.gov/growth-management/gma-topics/periodic-update/>

Additionally, under the Shoreline Management Act (SMA), local governments must adopt Shoreline Master Programs (SMPs) to regulate shoreline land use, ensuring alignment with the GMA. While SMPs are separate from comprehensive plans, Ruston, like many cities, integrates shoreline policies into its Plan for consistency.

The table below summarizes Ruston’s Comprehensive Plan elements:

Plan Elements	Purpose
Introduction, Participation & Future Vision	Provide a brief history of Ruston, explain comprehensive planning, why it’s important, how it’s implemented and who participates. Define Ruston’s future vision.
Community Character	Identify Ruston’s unique character and strategies to preserve and enhance it.
Land Use	Define Ruston’s preferred land use pattern and population forecast for the 20-year horizon.
Housing	Plan for additional density for a variety of income levels. Ensure the vitality and character of established neighborhoods.
Economic Vitality	Develop strategies to ensure economic vitality and a high quality of life.
Transportation	Address multi-modal level of service standards, traffic forecasting, and funding.
Utilities	Identify the general location, proposed location, and capacity of all existing and future utilities.
Capital Facilities	Provide an inventory of existing publicly owned capital facilities, a forecast of future needs and a financial plan for new or expanded facilities.
Shoreline	Protect Ruston’s shorelines through the adoption of a Shoreline Master Program.

WHY PLAN?

The Growth Management Act (GMA) of 1990 was enacted in Washington State to address rapid population growth and its impact on land use, infrastructure, and the environment. It aimed to curb urban sprawl, relieve pressure on infrastructure, protect natural resources, and ensure coordinated planning across jurisdictions. By emphasizing sustainable growth practices and community involvement, the GMA

sought to manage development more effectively and enhance overall regional planning. The GMA includes 15 goals to direct local governments in preparing comprehensive plans, which are summarized below. For the full descriptions, see RCW 36.70A.020.

- 1)Urban Growth.** Encourage development in urban areas.
- 2)Reduce Sprawl.** Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land.
- 3)Transportation.** Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems.
- 4)Housing.** Plan for and accommodate housing affordable to all economic segments.
- 5)Economic Development.** Encourage economic development throughout the state.
- 6)Property Rights.** Private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made.
- 7) Permits.** Applications should be processed in a timely and fair manner.
- 8)Natural Resource Industries.** Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries.
- 9)Open Space and Recreation.** Retain open space, enhance recreational opportunities.
- 10)Environment.** Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.
- 11)Citizen Participation and Coordination.** Encourage the involvement of citizens.
- 12)Public Facilities and Services.** Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate.
- 13)Historic Preservation.** Identify and encourage preservation.
- 14)Climate Change and Resiliency.** Ensure that comprehensive plans, development regulations, and regional policies, plans, and strategies to adapt to and mitigate the effects of a changing climate.

15)Shoreline Management. Protecting Washington's shorelines while allowing for sustainable development.

The GMA provides local governments with significant decision-making authority. For the City of Ruston, this means identifying community concerns and aspirations and developing strategies to address them. While the GMA outlines specific planning requirements, the final outcomes are shaped by Ruston's efforts. Consequently, the city is focused on creating a comprehensive plan that establishes a clear policy framework to guide the development and interpretation of regulations in line with Section 36.70A.070 of the Growth Management Act.

REGIONAL PLANNING

Under the GMA, Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) establish a framework for developing and adopting comprehensive plans for both the county and its cities. Their role is to coordinate the comprehensive plans of jurisdictions within the same county, addressing regional issues and matters affecting common borders. These policies guide growth, land use, and development decisions, ensuring consistency across local planning efforts. While the CPPs guide growth and development, cities and counties create their own comprehensive plans. For example, both Pierce County and the City of Ruston develop their own comprehensive plans within the framework of the CPPs. One long-term objective of the CPPs is for cities to become the primary providers of urban governmental services, while counties provide regional and rural services, facilitating growth at urban densities within city boundaries.

The CPPs at a minimum, address the following:

- Implementation of urban growth areas.
- Promotion of contiguous and orderly development and provision of urban services to such development.
- Siting public capital facilities of a countywide or statewide nature.
- Countywide transportation facilities and strategies.
- The need for affordable housing, such as housing for all economic segments of the population and parameters for its distribution.

- Joint county and city planning within urban growth areas.
- Policies for countywide economic development and employment.
- Analysis of fiscal impact.

Pierce County's CPPs must be consistent with the Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC) Multicounty Planning Policies (MPPs). The most recent set of these policies is included in PSRC's VISION 2050—the long-range growth management, environmental, economic, and transportation strategy for the Central Puget Sound region. VISION 2050 outlines a growth strategy for the next 30 years. The vision aims to provide exceptional quality of life, opportunity for all, connected communities, a spectacular natural environment, and an innovative, thriving economy. Key goals include increasing housing choices and affordability, significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions, sustaining a strong economy, restoring the health of the Puget Sound, protecting open spaces, encouraging growth in centers and near transit, and encouraging collaboration.



Figure 66 - Ruston Neighborhoods with Point Defiance Park and Vashon Ferry Terminal in the distance

CONSISTENCY, SUSTAINABILITY, & CONCURRENCY

Consistency, sustainability, and concurrency are three principles that weave throughout Ruston's Comprehensive Plan. Consistency means that Ruston's Plan must align with the GMA, the Puget Sound Regional Council's Vision 2050, and relevant Pierce County-wide planning policies, while also coordinating with the plans of neighboring jurisdictions and ensuring internal consistency among its elements.

Sustainability can be defined as creating and managing urban spaces in ways that meet current needs while preserving resources and opportunities for the future. Sustainable city planning emphasizes efficient use of resources, minimizing environmental impacts, promoting social equity, and ensuring long-term economic viability, all while preserving the natural environment and enhancing the quality of life for residents.

Concurrency is the concept that ensures public facilities and services needed for new development meet established levels of service standards without reducing current standards. An example of concurrency is expressed in The Transportation Element, where new development may be required to accommodate its impacts through improvements or strategies.

Consistency, sustainability, and concurrency principles work together to balance growth, the provision and financing of public facilities, and the vision of a sustainable future for generations to come.

LOCAL PLANNING IN RUSTON

Due to Ruston's small size and unique location, some elements mandated by the GMA, MPPs and CPPs are addressed at a high level of detail or not applicable at this time. For example:

- The City of Ruston's boundaries are set, and new growth is anticipated to be accommodated within current borders. Therefore, the Urban Growth Area (UGA) is contiguous with existing city limits.

- The Plan's Transportation Element presents summaries of traffic studies from the Point Ruston Final EIS, as amended. The scope of the traffic study, future traffic counts, and impacts on city transportation facilities is citywide. See the Appendix - Point Ruston Final EIS for the full transportation study and land use assumptions. The most current version of the Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (6-year TIP), which identifies and prioritizes future improvements is discussed in the Transportation Element and attached in the Appendix.
- The Plan's Housing Element provides estimates of future housing needs based on projected 2044 population and the 2022 Pierce County Buildable Lands Report.

The City of Ruston has prepared the Comprehensive Plan in a fashion that is consistent with the purpose and intent of the GMA, MPPs and CPPs. The goals, issues, and policies contained in the plan directly pertain to the future needs of the City of Ruston.

AMENDMENTS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Like business plans, Ruston's Comprehensive Plan provides the framework for how our community will grow. And, like business plans, it must be updated over time to remain effective. Many communities amend their comprehensive plans annually and regularly adopt changes to the development regulations that implement them. In addition to these regular amendments, the state requires counties and cities to periodically conduct a thorough review of their plans and regulations to ensure they align with any relevant changes in the GMA and respond to shifts in land use and population growth. This mandatory "periodic update" occurs every ten years for most communities.

The process for amending Ruston's Comprehensive Plan shall be consistent with WAC 365-196-610, WAC 365-196-640, 365-196-650 and RCW 36.70A.130.

The Plan should be reviewed annually for amendments that ensure:

- Internal Plan consistency.

- Consistency with city development regulations.
- Consistency with other jurisdictions, state, and federal laws; and
- Updates to GMA laws and interpretations are addressed.

Evaluation of The Plan will be an integral part of the amendment process. The Plan review process should be well-publicized, address annual amendments, and emergency amendments, and may include a specialized periodic update process.

To ensure public participation, amendments shall be considered by the Planning Commission in an open public hearing before being forwarded to the City Council. Notice of the City's annual review process for Comprehensive Plan amendments shall be published as required for public hearings. Specific procedures for Plan amendment applications shall be included in the Ruston Municipal Code under Title 29.

WHO PARTICIPATES?

The City of Ruston is committed to thorough public engagement as an essential part of a successful Comprehensive Plan update. All community stakeholders—including residents, property owners, businesses, nearby jurisdictions, affected agencies, Tribal Nations, and special interest groups—are invited and encouraged to participate in the update process. Public outreach methods, such as open houses, public hearings, mailings, and Ruston's website, may be used to gather input.

The Planning Commission, appointed by the City Council, plays a critical role in Ruston's land-use matters. For Comprehensive Plan updates, the Commission is responsible for holding public hearings, gathering public comments, discussing potential changes, and ultimately making a draft plan recommendation to the City Council for adoption. Once adopted by the City Council, the final document collectively outlines Ruston's future vision for the next planning horizon. Updates to Ruston's Comprehensive Plan begin with public engagement to identify key issues and the overall desired vision of its stakeholders.

FUTURE VISION

Ruston's future vision is one of a thriving, environmentally healthy, and sustainable city with a rich history and unique character. An excellent steward of its resources, the city offers high-quality services and amenities while maintaining its welcoming small-town charm. Residents and visitors enjoy sweeping views of Puget Sound, the Olympic Mountains, and Mount Rainier from parks and protected view corridors throughout the neighborhoods and commercial areas.

Pedestrians and bicyclists benefit from a comprehensive multimodal transportation system that extends throughout the city, along the shores of Commencement Bay, and connects to nearby Point Defiance Park and regional trail networks. Key gateways to Ruston include Pearl Street, 51st Street, and Ruston Way, and offer a mix of commercial and residential uses. The community places a high value on pedestrian-friendly thoroughfares, reflected in the thoughtful design and placement of automobile parking. The city is also served by mass transit and light rail, supporting transit-oriented development.

Ruston has successfully completed its Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan, guiding the maintenance, creation, enhancement, and conservation of community parks, programs, trails, and open spaces. The cleanup and renovation of Rust Park, along with the completion of Promontory Hill Park, are highly valued and enjoyed by the community. The city continues to cooperate with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington Department of Ecology to clean up the former ASARCO site and address the pollution left throughout the community by the smelting industry.

Ruston remains primarily a residential community with a vibrant commercial core. Urban centers host most of the city's businesses, offering a variety of options for shopping and services. Businesses are well integrated architecturally and functionally with existing structures, well supported by city services and a vital part of Ruston's charm and sense of community. The character of residential neighborhoods has remained consistent, with many traditional Arts and Crafts-style homes featuring porches and garages accessed from alleys. New developments are primarily infill

projects, such as subdivisions, live-work units, and middle housing, all designed to complement the existing neighborhood character.

Civic buildings, facilities, and public gathering spaces in Ruston are well maintained and effectively serve the community. The city has leveraged opportunities for civic development, securing funding for various public projects and amenities. Ruston collaborates with Pierce County and Tacoma in joint planning efforts to efficiently achieve strong regional connections, services, and amenities. Community members are encouraged to engage in Ruston’s planning and government processes, all with the goal of creating a sustainable city for future generations.

VISION STATEMENT

Ruston envisions a thriving, sustainable future where small-town charm meets a healthy, active, and highly engaged community. With breathtaking views, quality open spaces, and a comprehensive multimodal transportation system that prioritizes pedestrian-friendly streets, we are committed to environmental stewardship and providing a variety of housing options, high-quality services, and amenities. Our goal is to foster a safe, vibrant urban environment that remains resilient and desirable for generations to come.

Chapter 2

Community

Character



INTRODUCTION

Ruston values its distinctive character and strong sense of community, evident in its public participation, festivals, celebrations, and special events. Residents cherish Ruston's history, unique charm, and small-town atmosphere, striving to preserve and enhance its "sense of place." Based on public input, key community treasures contributing to Ruston's character generally fall into two categories: form and celebrations.

- Form includes elements such as buildings, architecture, historically or culturally significant sites, streets, sidewalks, districts, scenic views, signage, public art, parks, trails, and open spaces.
- Celebrations encompass community festivals and events that foster connections, honor traditions, and highlight moments from both the present and the past.

Preserving and enhancing these elements inspires community engagement and pride, strengthens relationships, promotes stewardship, and connects Ruston to its heritage. This commitment fosters a distinctive environment where residents, visitors, and businesses thrive and flourish.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

In recent years, preserving and enhancing Ruston's walkability has been a primary focus. The city has applied for numerous grants, securing significant funding for improvements to its valuable grid of streets and sidewalks. Streets have been repaved, sidewalks repaired, and new features—such as street signs, lighting, bulb-outs, and bollards—have been installed to create a more walkable community. Most recently, funding has been secured for a public engagement process and long-awaited environmental remediation and recreation improvements to Rust Park.

Ruston's economy has benefited from the environmental cleanup and redevelopment of the ASARCO industrial site and the initial revitalization of the Pearl District.

However, as development progresses, it remains critical to prioritize the community's character. Strategies to enhance and protect Ruston's "sense of place" include:

- Protecting and enhancing walkability, bike paths, and transit through Complete Streets policies, codes, and designs by prioritizing pedestrians and cyclists over vehicles. This approach emphasizes traffic calming, alley-accessed garages, and the removal of vehicle priority to create vibrant, walkable streetscapes.
- Prioritizing pedestrian-oriented, human-scaled architecture and site designs by reducing vehicle dominance.
- Preserving and enhancing Ruston's parks, trails, plazas, and open spaces.
- Protect scenic views while allowing development.
- Safeguarding sites of historical, cultural, civic, or environmental significance.
- Developing and implementing a unique "brand" for Ruston that differentiates it from surrounding communities.
- Continuing community events like the Easter Egg Hunt, 4th of July Parade, National Night Out block parties, and the Tree Lighting.
- Exploring additional community events and collaborations with businesses or other agencies.

FUTURE VISION

Ruston continues to evolve as a community that balances growth with preservation, fostering a distinct "sense of place" that sets it apart from neighboring communities. Its natural hills provide breathtaking views of Commencement Bay, Mount Rainier, and the Olympic Mountains. Once an industrial company town, Ruston has revitalized the ASARCO site into a thriving urban center that seamlessly integrates residential and commercial developments. The Pearl District has also been transformed into a vibrant corridor offering local dining and services while strengthening connections to nearby neighborhoods. Ruston collaborates with Metro Parks, Tacoma, and local Tribes to provide regional shopping, recreation, tourism, and cultural experiences.

Ruston remains true to its small-town charm. Neighborhoods feature thoughtfully designed Arts and Crafts-style homes, welcoming front porches, and pedestrian-

friendly streetscapes. Alleys primarily access garages, enhancing walkability and promoting vibrant streets.

The community emphasizes pedestrian-oriented, human-scaled architecture and site designs while prioritizing seamless connections through bikeable routes and transit-friendly infrastructure that integrate walkability, health, and human interaction. Hillside developments blend into natural slopes, preserving scenic views while maintaining aesthetic appeal.

Ruston is dedicated to preserving and enhancing parks, trails, plazas, and open spaces, safeguarding sites of historical, cultural, civic, or environmental significance, and fostering a sense of pride in its history and character. A distinct "brand" sets Ruston apart, reflected in city communications, signage, and public spaces.

The city hosts cherished events like the Easter Egg Hunt, the 4th of July Parade, National Night Out, and the Tree Lighting while collaborating with businesses and agencies to create new activities. Balancing growth and preservation, Ruston responsibly manages resources and fosters a sustainable, vibrant community for generations to come.

GOALS AND POLICIES

Community Character Goal 1: Preserve and enhance neighborhood charm and vibrancy while supporting new developments that harmonize with the area's design, prioritizing form alongside function.

CC Policy 1.1 Allow development that is compatible in scale and character with the existing neighborhood. Require architecturally thoughtful transitions between new and existing structures that are visually appealing and allow for adequate light and open space.

- CC Policy 1.2** Allow infill development when lot and home size are in proportion and similar to existing neighborhood character.
- CC Policy 1.3** Design residential developments with arts and crafts-style homes (i.e. Craftsman, Tudor, and Pacific Northwest Timber Frame). Visible building materials should reflect human handicraft (cedar lap siding or shingles) over plywood siding such as T-1-11.
- CC Policy 1.4** Neighboring uses should be compatible through the application of architectural treatments.
- CC Policy 1.5** Homes should provide living space as the dominant feature of the street elevation. Front porches, dormers, stonework/masonry, arbors, and architectural features should orient homes toward the street instead of garages. Garages should be accessed from alleys to enhance the pedestrian-friendly character of the street front.
- CC Policy 1.6** Help preserve Ruston’s small-town character by encouraging cottage industries or live-work units where employees work from home offices or shops.
- CC Policy 1.7** Encourage low impact live-work units and accessory dwelling units by simplifying the permitting process. Provide architectural examples that show good integration with the existing neighborhood.
- CC Policy 1.8** Promote residential design that is environmentally sensitive, energy efficient, and aesthetically pleasing.
- CC Policy 1.9** Emphasize pedestrian-oriented, human-scaled architecture and site designs through Ruston’s codes and standards.

Community Character Goal 2: Protect scenic views while allowing development.

- CC Policy 2.1** Hillside development should be terraced into existing slopes and provide architectural treatments from all significant viewpoints. Structures should be placed with minimal impact to scenic views. Roof tops should be designed to be aesthetically pleasing, provide screening, and may include “green uses” such as gardens, landscaping or stormwater treatment.
- CC Policy 2.2** Ensure scenic views will be maintained by limiting the height of structures and vegetation. Structures and vegetation should not exceed the maximum height permitted for structures per Ruston’s code.
- CC Policy 2.3** Ensure scenic view corridors will be maintained when allowing development. Provide modulation or varying roof designs to minimize encroachment on view corridors for existing uses. Plan appropriate landscaping to avoid encroachment on views.
- CC Policy 2.4** Enhance the scenic views and aesthetic quality of Ruston by placing overhead utilities underground.

Community Character Goal 3: Preserve and enhance sites of historical, cultural, civic, or environmental significance that contribute to the community’s identity and sense of place, including designated landmark opportunity sites.

- CC Policy 3.1** Identify sites of significance and seek funding to enhance them.
- CC Policy 3.2** Ensure civic buildings, other landmark opportunity sites, and gathering places are prominently visible in character and location-unique from the vernacular architecture (i.e. additional building height or unique landmark quality architecture).

- CC Policy 3.3** Develop a Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) plan to assess community needs and preferences for buildings, parks, trails, plazas, and open spaces.
- CC Policy 3.4** Improve existing community gathering places with landscaping and recreational amenities.
- CC Policy 3.5** Seek new locations for community gathering places such as a community garden. Explore the use of city parks and undeveloped rights-of-way.
- CC Policy 3.6** Celebrate city history and culture through public art, photos, plaques, and educational initiatives.

Community Character Goal 4: Preserve and enhance Ruston’s celebrations that foster community, strengthen local identity, boost economic vitality, and honor past and present moments.

- CC Policy 4.1** Gather community input regarding events, celebrations and recreational programs through inclusive opportunities.
- CC Policy 4.2** Encourage local partnerships with businesses and organizations to plan and implement community events and programs.
- CC Policy 4.3** Seek grants and partnerships to fund community events and programs.
- CC Policy 4.4** Encourage and facilitate community-building events by permitting temporary street closures to create safe and vibrant gathering spaces.
- CC Policy 4.5** Permit food trucks to operate as one-time food providers at community events, enhancing the variety and accessibility of food options for attendees.
- CC Policy 4.6** Support initiatives that integrate community building and environmental stewardship of public lands.

Community Character Goal 5: Protect and enhance pedestrian, biking, and transit connectivity by prioritizing Complete Streets concepts and codes.

- CC Policy 5.1** Allow development that encourages pedestrian-oriented architecture.
- CC Policy 5.2** Design commercial streetscapes with wide sidewalks, landscaping, street lighting, and room for outdoor seating to encourage pedestrian traffic.
- CC Policy 5.3** Design residential streetscapes with traditional sidewalks that include two-foot scoring patterns, landscaping, street lighting, and connectivity to other neighborhoods and commercial zones.
- CC Policy 5.4** Create an excellent pedestrian experience through the use of safely defined walkways, landscaping, architecture, and art. Pedestrian connections are important and should be required between all uses, encouraging a more walkable and healthful community.
- CC Policy 5.5** Require developer mitigation that supports complete streets along project frontages.
- CC Policy 5.6** Seek funding to implement Complete Streets concepts.

Community Character Goal 6: Develop and implement a unique “brand” for Ruston that differentiates itself from surrounding areas.

- CC Policy 6.1** Develop and implement a marketing and wayfinding plan that establishes Ruston’s “brand” and includes coordinated standards throughout city communication, buildings, crosswalks, bollards, wayfinding, signage, light fixtures,

manhole covers, garbage cans, benches, street furnishings, sidewalk scoring and paving patterns, etc.

CC Policy 6.2 Seek funding for development and implementation of Ruston’s marketing and wayfinding plan.

POLICY CONNECTIONS

The Community Character Element is key to preserving Ruston’s unique identity while planning for future growth. It works alongside other elements of the Comprehensive Plan to protect and enhance the city’s character.

The **Land Use** and **Housing Elements** promote pedestrian-friendly, human-scale development that fits Ruston’s small-town charm. These policies help protect scenic views, foster walkability, and integrate the city’s character into residential and commercial areas. Similarly, the **Transportation Element** focuses on Complete Streets policies and designs to improve walkability, bikeability, and transit connections, supporting vibrant and accessible streetscapes.

The **Capital Facilities Element** ensures that parks, trails, open spaces, and city buildings are preserved and improved. These spaces are essential to Ruston’s charm and provide venues for community events. The **Economic Vitality Element** builds on this by promoting Ruston’s unique "brand" to attract visitors, businesses, and investment while ensuring that growth complements the city’s character.

The **Shoreline Element** emphasizes protecting and enhancing Ruston’s waterfront, ensuring development aligns with the community's identity. It prioritizes scenic views, public access, and environmental stewardship, making the shoreline a valued part of Ruston.

By connecting these elements, the Community Character Element guides decisions that honor Ruston’s past, enhance its present, and shape a future that retains its unique character.

Chapter 3

Land Use



The Land Use Element is designed to help Ruston achieve its vision for a city that has accommodated growth in a smart fashion while ensuring that the community's high quality of life, small-town character and rich history is retained. The pattern of uses that make up Ruston help support the community's long-term vision and goals by describing locations where development is appropriate, what the general character of the development should be and its intensity. The policies and goals in the Land Use element provide the basis for land use designations, development regulations and zoning in the regulating plan that will implement the Comprehensive Plan.

The City's land use origins include an important fishing area for the S'Puyallupabsh (Puyallup) Indian Tribe that inhabited the general Commencement Bay area. Arrival of European settlers brought the smelting industry that established in the 1890s, including growing neighborhoods and commercial areas. The operations were subsequently sold to ASARCO and smelting activities continued. By 1906 Ruston incorporated into a well-established community with unique characteristics and amenities. In the 1990s the Federal Government designated ASARCO as a Superfund site and required it to be cleaned of contaminants including arsenic, lead and other toxins.

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, Ruston has retained much of its valuable character and charm, developing into an urban city with an established land use pattern of primarily residential single-family and mixed-use commercial areas. Uniquely, Ruston is almost completely surrounded by the City of Tacoma and Commencement Bay and its urban growth area is contiguous with existing city boundaries. There are no designated potential annexation areas for Ruston. New growth is anticipated to occur through redevelopment of commercial areas, infill of residential areas, and new mixed use development in the Point Ruston Development, the former ASARCO industrial and environmental clean-up site.

Ruston's preferred land use pattern is summarized in the following policy themes:

- Preserve Ruston's heritage;
- Retain existing traditional neighborhood character as it relates to the Community Character Element;
- Strengthen Ruston's commercial core and ensure new and existing developments are integrated with each other so there are no pedestrian or architectural barriers within the city;
- Encourage infill development;
- Provide multimodal connections to commercial areas, residences and recreation amenities; and
- Develop community gathering places and a healthful walkable community.

Ruston's development standards implement the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan through regulations and other planning instruments such as maps, transportation thoroughfares, and other design requirements.

Growth Management and VISION 2050

Ruston's goals and vision are consistent with land use goals of the Growth Management Act (GMA) and VISION 2050 including: development in urban areas (infill) to retain open space; encouragement of live-work dwelling units; providing a variety of housing types; address housing affordability across incomes; provide opportunities for all; sustainable economic growth; ensuring that public facilities and services are adequate; investing in transportation to support planned land use and to provide travel choices; and historic preservation. Ruston's Comprehensive Plan aligns with GMA and VISION 2050 goals to:

- Focus growth within urban areas to create walkable, compact and transit-oriented communities that maintain local character.
- Identify and protect significant visual and cultural resources that preserve community character and placemaking efforts.
- Design facilities throughout the region that advance community development.
- Advance redevelopment and infill as opportunities for revitalizing communities, including along linear corridors (such as low-scale retail strips along the thoroughfares).
- Designate open space and parks at a variety of scales, create public amenities, contribute to the character of communities, and provide opportunities for recreation and physical activity.

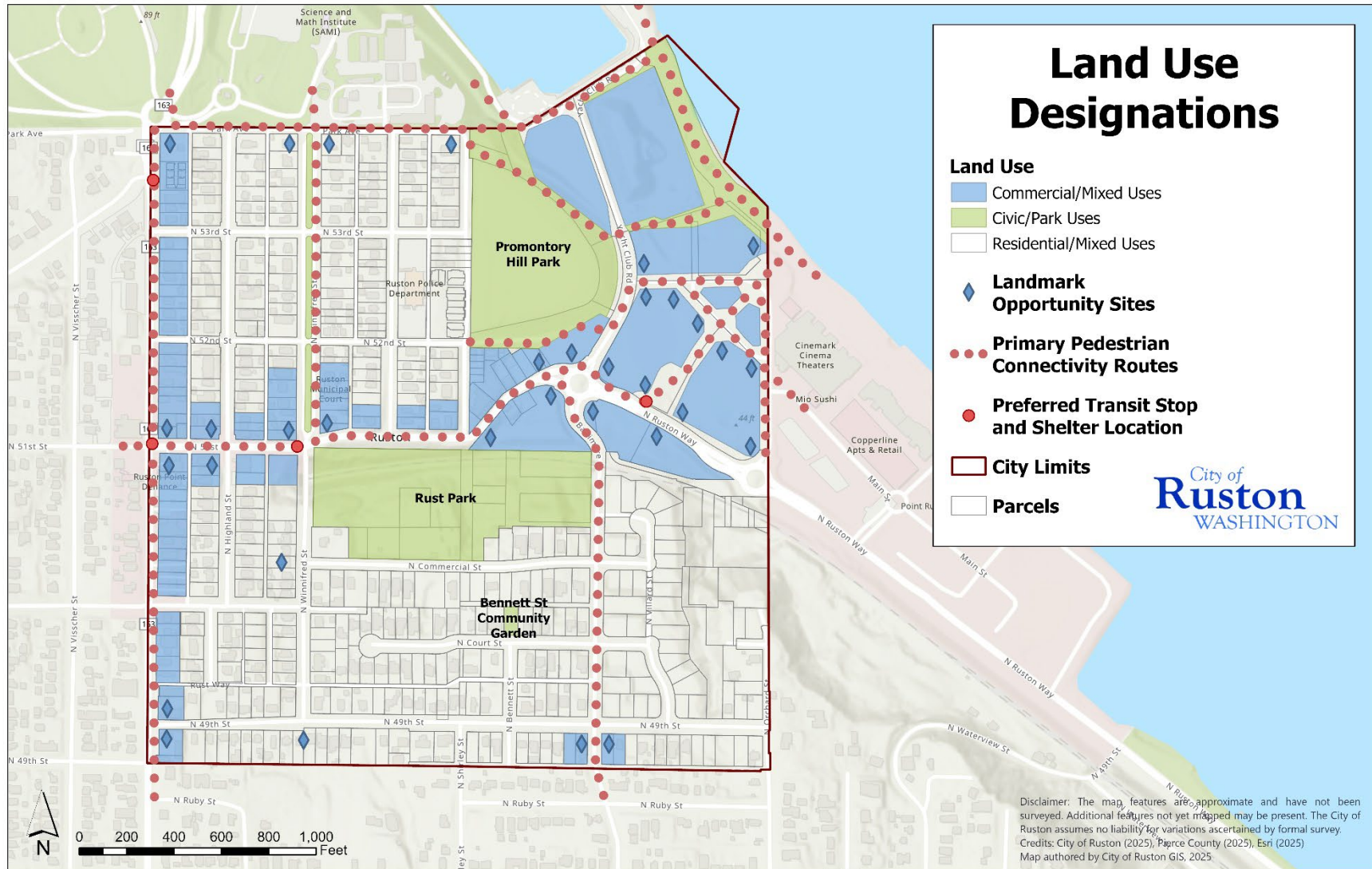
EXISTING LAND USE

General Land Uses and Zoning

Ruston is primarily built-out with a majority of land dedicated to low density residential homes and a modest amount of multifamily dwelling unit options. Core commercial areas include Pearl Street, North 51st Street, and Point Ruston. Ruston is surrounded by City of Tacoma residential and commercial uses to the north, south, east and west, with the exception of Commencement Bay which lies to the north and northeast, and Point Defiance Park which is located to the north and

northwest. The Tacoma Yacht Club is also located to the north of Ruston. Across Pearl Street due west, Ruston is abutted by Tacoma commercial and residential uses. To the south and east, Ruston is flanked by Tacoma single-family residential neighborhoods. See Figure 3.1 for a map of existing land use.

Figure 3.1 Existing Land Use Map



Source: City of Ruston, 2025

Utility Services

Lands useful for public services are currently being utilized as such or are accommodated through inter-local agreements with the City of Tacoma. Ruston's water supply is provided through an inter-local agreement with the City of Tacoma. Therefore, provision for protection of the quality and quantity of Ruston's groundwater used for public water supplies falls within the City of Tacoma's rules and regulations. There are no wells present within city limits. Sanitary sewer services including treatment are also provided by the City of Tacoma through an inter-local agreement. Ruston has its own stormwater treatment facilities which tie into the City of Tacoma's systems. Ruston has adopted the 2006 Department of Ecology Stormwater Manual and follows those prescribed practices for stormwater treatment. Current existing utility corridors offer some room for natural gas and telecommunications facilities for future growth and upgrades. For more information and policies on utilities, see the Utilities Element of this plan.

Schools

There are no schools located within Ruston's boundaries. Residents are served by the Tacoma School District.

Recreation, Emergency, and Other City Services

Recreational opportunities are provided in dedicated open spaces within city limits including:

- Rust Park;
- Bennett Street Community Garden;
- Winnifred Street Park;
- Promontory Hill Park; and
- The Ruston Way Waterwalk, which is located along the shoreline of Commencement Bay.

As urban development continues, so will the need to maintain, preserve, and enhance open space, recreational facilities, and critical areas in Ruston. Policies to

designate and protect critical areas including wetlands, fish and wildlife habitat protection areas, frequently flooded areas, critical aquifer recharge areas, and geologically hazardous areas are addressed in the Land Use element of the Comprehensive Plan and implementing critical areas regulations. In developing these policies, Ruston included the best available science (BAS) to protect the functions and values of critical areas and give “special consideration” to conservation or protection measures necessary to preserve or enhance anadromous fisheries.

Additionally, other public service uses in Ruston including trash collection, maintenance, police, fire, medical aid, and city administration operate from various publicly owned lands and locations within city boundaries. The Fire Department and medical aid services are located on Winnifred Street. City Hall, Police, maintenance offices, and other administration services are in the former Ruston School Building on Shirley Street. Additional emergency services, such as urgent care and general hospitals, are located outside of city limits in neighboring Tacoma.

GROWTH POTENTIAL

Population forecasting is an integral part of the planning process, and the GMA requires jurisdictions to estimate the number of new households and jobs that will be accommodated in the future. GMA requires Ruston’s forecast to be consistent with regional targets. With Ruston being largely built out, growth potential is limited in the city to the Point Ruston Development, infill development, and any redevelopment.

Growth Accommodation

Since Ruston doesn’t have an urban growth area, allowing the city to become larger in area, our only option is to use the land within Ruston’s borders more efficiently. In some cases, redevelopment of underutilized sites may occur, but more than likely, additional growth will occur by allowing increased height in select locations and infill throughout the city.

Examples of residential infill are expected to include:

- Subdivision of larger single-family lots into smaller lots;
- Construction of accessory dwellings;
- Live-work units; and
- Middle housing.

In addition to targeted growth, redevelopment in the Point Ruston Development (MPD-PR) accounts for much of the citywide growth. The Point Ruston Development is expected to provide opportunities for redevelopment of commercial and residential areas throughout the community.

Buildable Lands Analysis **Summary**

In order to determine how Ruston may accommodate growth into 2044, we first must assess how much developable land is available and then designate it accordingly. To do so, Pierce County conducted a buildable lands analysis for Ruston in 2022, included in Appendix C. This analysis categorized land by zoning classification to illustrate the total acreage per category, as shown in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2 City of Ruston Zone Classifications

	Zone Classification	Zone Type¹	Total Acres²
COM	Commercial	Commercial	2.9
COM-P	Commercial	Commercial	4.5
MPD	Master Planned Development	Planned Development	1.0
MPD-PR	Master Planned Development – Point Ruston	Planned Development	41.2
MPD-RL	Master Planned Development	Planned Development	1.2
PD-SH	Master Planned Development – Stack Hill	Planned Development	6.8
RES	Residential	Residential	64.1

Source: Pierce County Buildable Lands Analysis, 2022

¹For purposes of the buildable lands inventory and analysis; not a representation of the city zoning code.

²Represents parcel acreage, not zoning coverage.

These areas were then analyzed for vacant and underutilized lands, with deductions applied for critical areas, capital facilities, market factors, and plat constraints. The resulting analysis informed the housing and employment capacity tables presented in Figure 3.3 (Housing) and Figure 3.6 (Employment).

Housing Capacity

From the buildable land analysis, Pierce County determined Ruston's housing capacity across the city. In total, Ruston's housing capacity came out to be 653 units, with the overwhelming majority coming from the Point Ruston area with projected pipeline units.

Figure 3.3 City of Ruston Housing Capacity Summary (2020-2044)

	Vacant Single Units	Pipeline Units	Vacant Housing Capacity	Underutilized Housing Capacity	Total Housing Capacity
COM	-	-	-	-1	-1
COM-P	-	-	-	-1	-1
MPD	-	-	-	-	-
MPD-PR	-	620	-	-	620
MPD-RL	-	-	-	-	-
MPD-SH	2	-	-	-	2
RES	19	-	6	8	33
Total	21	620	6	6	653

Source: Pierce County Buildable Lands Analysis, 2022

Population Projections

After determining how much buildable land Ruston has to accommodate growth, **how much will Ruston's population increase between 2020 and 2044?**

In working with Pierce County and Puget Sound Regional Council, Ruston is forecasted to grow to a total population of 1,508 persons, 686 housing units, and 603 jobs by 2044. The breakdown of population, housing, and employment targets are found below in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4 2044 Population, Housing, Employment Targets

Target	Estimated '20 Count	'20 -'44 Growth	'44 Total Allocation
Population	1,055	453	1,508
Housing	517	169	686
Employment	532	71	603

Source: PSRC Vision 2050

How does this compare to neighboring jurisdictions? A table comparison between projected growth in Ruston and growth in neighboring Tacoma is seen in Figure 3.5 below.

Figure 3.5 2044 Population Targets

Jurisdiction	Estimated '20 Population	'20 -'44 Population Growth	'44 Total Population Allocation
Ruston	1,055	453	1,508
Tacoma	219,346	105,977	325,323

Source: PSRC Vision 2050

Employment Projections

As part of the buildable lands analysis, Pierce County also reviewed Ruston's capacity for employment. In total, Ruston's employment capacity came out to be 778 jobs, with the overwhelming majority coming from the Point Ruston area with projected jobs coming down the pipeline.

Figure 3.6 City of Ruston Employment Capacity Summary (2020-2044)

	Vacant Employment Capacity	Underutilized Employment Capacity	Pipeline Jobs	Total Employment Capacity
COM	9	6	-	15
COM-P	5	9	-	14
MPD	-	-	-	-
MPD-PR	-	-	749	749
MPD-RL	-	-	-	-
MPD-SH	-	-	-	-
RES	-	-	-	-
Total	14	15	749	778

Source: Pierce County Buildable Lands Analysis, 2022

For further land capacity analysis, see Appendix C – Buildable Lands Analysis. For further housing analysis, see the Housing Element.

FUTURE VISION

Ruston is treasured for its independence, rich history, friendly atmosphere and unique character. Ruston is a residential mixed use community, urban in character and primarily built-out. The area has remained primarily residential and accommodated infill through live-work and accessory dwelling units that complement surrounding uses and have high quality architecture. Multifamily developments are largely in mixed use areas and are designed well with exceptional architectural features and treatments, fitting-in with existing neighborhood character. Ruston has a strong and healthy economy with vibrant retail businesses and services located in commercial and other mixed-use districts, many within a

five-minute walk of neighborhoods. Ruston is a very walkable city, and the built and natural environments are well connected. Various types of transportation thoroughfares provide passage for pedestrians, bicyclists, and autos throughout Ruston and nearby Tacoma and Point Defiance Park.

Ruston has long embraced the vision of a walkable community, rooted in its original architecture that reflects traditional neighborhoods with a grid street network, including sidewalks, alleys, and a diversity of uses throughout all areas of the city. As a result, Ruston remains an interesting, enjoyable community with a rich character that has endured for over a century. Moving forward, the city builds upon the successful principles of New Urbanism and form-based codes, ensuring that new development aligns with the community's historical context.

To address the challenges posed by mid-20th-century development patterns, Ruston prioritizes infill that integrates seamlessly with existing neighborhoods, avoiding sprawl. To enhance its walkability, the community's vision emphasizes three key principles: building new development at or near the sidewalk, creating building street-fronts that are visually and physically permeable, and locating parking behind, under, or above buildings. Ruston encourages accessory dwelling units and live-work opportunities that fit harmoniously with surrounding uses, as well as new commercial developments that are pedestrian-oriented and architecturally compatible with the area. By maintaining a focus on walkability and ecological sustainability, Ruston remains a balanced community that values both its heritage and future growth.

GOALS AND POLICIES

Land use goals and policies are essential for guiding the development and growth of Ruston in a manner that preserves its unique character and promotes a vibrant community. These policies establish a framework for balancing residential, commercial, and recreational spaces, ensuring that land use decisions align with the community's vision for sustainable growth.

Land Use Goal 1: Ruston guides growth through sustainable, well-planned development that balances housing, employment, and public facilities while preserving its small-town character and enhancing walkability.

- LU Policy 1.1 Provide sufficient land area and densities to meet Ruston’s projected needs for housing, employment and public facilities over the next 20-year planning horizon.
- LU Policy 1.2 Ensure that development regulations, including the allowed density, uses and site requirements, provide for the achievement of Ruston’s preferred land use pattern.
- LU Policy 1.3 Allow development only where adequate public facilities and services can be provided.
- LU Policy 1.4 Ensure development provides for adequate infrastructure, including telecommunication facilities and multi-modal linkages, to support the concept of live-work units and “live, work, play” in Ruston.
- LU Policy 1.5 Encourage sustainable development of both public and private lands and right-of-way in Ruston using techniques, such as green building and green infrastructure.
- LU Policy 1.6 Reduce impervious surfaces by encouraging green roofs, rain gardens and other pervious asphalt-like surfaces.
- LU Policy 1.7 Encourage infill development on suitable vacant parcels and the redevelopment of underutilized parcels. Ensure that the height, bulk and design of these projects are compatible with their surroundings.
- LU Policy 1.8 Promote infill development such as accessory dwelling units and live-work units that are designed to fit in well with surrounding neighborhoods.

- LU Policy 1.9 Encourage new commercial development and redevelopment of underutilized properties that architecturally fits well with nearby uses and is pedestrian-oriented toward street frontages.
- LU Policy 1.10 Provide opportunities for shops, services, recreation, and access to healthy food sources within walking or bicycling distance of homes, workplaces and other gathering places.
- LU Policy 1.11 Design developments to encourage access by modes of travel other than driving alone, such as walking, bicycling and transit, and to provide connections to the non-motorized system.
- LU Policy 1.12 Develop Ruston as a balanced community while maintaining its traditional small-town character.
- LU Policy 1.13 Provide inclusive community engagement opportunities in planning processes to ensure land use decisions do not negatively impact historically underrepresented communities.
- LU Policy 1.14 Private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made.
- LU Policy 1.15 Seek to protect and connect open space corridors with regulatory and voluntary mechanisms in coordination with the City of Tacoma to maintain and enhance habitat connectivity while supporting the public benefits of these places.

Land Use Goal 2: Residential development in Ruston integrates with neighborhood character, respects scenic views and natural landscapes, and integrates sustainable and diverse housing options.

- LU Policy 2.1 Encourage multifamily developments in appropriate areas that offer convenient multimodal access to local stores and services. Multifamily developments should not block defined scenic view

corridors and should be designed to architecturally integrate with the existing neighborhood.

LU Policy 2.2 Encourage live-work units in areas where they have convenient multimodal access to local stores and services.

LU Policy 2.3 Encourage affordable housing in appropriate areas where there is convenient pedestrian access to local stores and services. Affordable housing development should not detract from the established small-town atmosphere of the community or block defined scenic view corridors.

LU Policy 2.4 Ensure that new development enhances the character and vitality of established residential neighborhoods.

LU Policy 2.5 Ensure that new development is designed to be environmentally sensitive, energy efficient, and aesthetically pleasing as specified in the community character element.

LU Policy 2.6 Encourage building types, designs, and height restrictions that support Ruston's preferred land use pattern, maintain scenic views and defined view corridors, protect community treasures, and respect existing residential neighborhoods while accommodating future density.

Land Use Goal 3: Commercial development in Ruston enhances the city's pedestrian-oriented character, minimizes impacts on nearby residential areas, and integrates mixed-use and multifamily housing to support a vibrant community that exemplifies the concept of "live, work, play."

- LU Policy 3.1 Design buildings architecturally and functionally so frontages are pedestrian oriented toward the street with residential units included above or behind.
- LU Policy 3.2 Avoid impacts on nearby residents such as noise and light by designing and placing buildings accordingly.
- LU Policy 3.3 Design buildings to transition architecturally when near single-family residences. Examples include graduated building heights across alleys and properly screened parking.
- LU Policy 3.4 Allow multifamily development in commercial areas. Locating multifamily residences near employment, commercial uses, and recreational amenities supports the concept of “live, work, play” in Ruston.
- LU Policy 3.5 Require commercial business pedestrian entrances along street frontages be the functional main entrance, unlocked during business hours, and connected by pedestrian pathways to parking areas.
- LU Policy 3.6 Strengthen Ruston’s commercial core by encouraging development in designated commercial zones on Pearl Street, N. 51st Street, and the Point Ruston Development site.
- LU Policy 3.7 Attract commercial development to Ruston by:
- Developing and implementing economic strategies;
 - Implementing transportation plans that ensure multimodal access to businesses and effective parking management;
 - Requiring pedestrian-oriented site planning, signage, and architectural treatments for buildings; and
 - Mandating continuous pedestrian connections between commercial sites and across city rights-of-way.

- LU Policy 3.8 Collaborate with the surrounding business community, the City of Tacoma, and Metro Parks Tacoma to attract businesses and tourists to the area.
- LU Policy 3.9 Zone the north end of Pearl Street for commercial uses, with any conversion to a commercial land use designation occurring for the entire side of the block facing Pearl Street, rather than on a lot-by-lot basis.
- LU Policy 3.10 Address parking requirements for commercial areas along Pearl Street and N. 51st Street by reducing or eliminating minimum parking requirements and allowing for parking to be located above, below, or behind buildings, acknowledging potential site constraints.

Land Use Goal 4: Ruston protects and enhances environmentally sensitive areas to ensure long-term ecological health and community well-being.

- LU Policy 4.1 **Use best available science to preserve and enhance the functions and values of critical areas through policies, regulations, programs, and incentives.**
- LU Policy 4.2 Conserve and protect environmentally critical areas from no net loss of ecological functions and values or degradation.
- LU Policy 4.3 Maintain, and where possible improve, air quality, water quality, soil quality, habitat connectivity, and ecosystem function to ensure the health and well-being of people, plants, and animals, prioritizing vulnerable communities and those disproportionately impacted.
- LU Policy 4.4 Support sustainable development and strive toward becoming a sustainable community by implementing low

impact development (LID) practices and creating clean building incentive programs.

LU Policy 4.5 Support the use of integrated and interdisciplinary environmental planning strategies in coordination with local, regional, and Tribal bodies.

LU Policy 4.6 Preserve, restore, and enhance native vegetation, with particular emphasis on areas that protect habitat, sequesters and stores carbon, and contributes to overall ecological function.

LU Policy 4.7 Identify and address climate change and natural hazards through equitable land use planning that protects vulnerable populations and builds community resilience.

LU Policy 4.8 Where allowances for critical area buffer alterations are warranted, provide clear direction for mitigation to achieve no net loss of ecosystem functions and values, with potential options for enhancement and restoration.

Land Use Goal 5: Ruston's network of parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities provides diverse opportunities for active and passive recreation, strengthens community connections, and supports a high quality of life for residents, visitors, and wildlife.

LU Policy 5.1 Require public and private open space suitable for active and passive recreation such as plazas, parks, trails, natural areas, rooftop gardens, private patios, verandas, and porches be integrated into the design of all new development. When physical open space cannot be provided the city may consider a fee in-lieu of. Funds would be used to acquire or improve existing or future recreational opportunities.

- LU Policy 5.2 Actively seek opportunities to secure and improve open space for the purposes of providing recreational and habitat connectivity opportunities to the Ruston community.
- LU Policy 5.3 Work with Metro Parks Tacoma and the City of Tacoma to provide recreational opportunities and habitat corridors within city boundaries and connections to Tacoma’s recreational facilities and Point Defiance Park.
- LU Policy 5.4 Formalize Winnifred Street Park as a dedicated public park.
- LU Policy 5.5 Integrate park and playground facilities into civic buildings and spaces to enhance community gathering opportunities.
- LU Policy 5.6 Secure funding for developing open space between Rust Park and Baltimore Street, with potential improvements such as a creek crossing, preservation and enhancement of native vegetation, rhododendron garden, or environmental education features.
- LU Policy 5.7 Identify and establish a community garden location, such as a pea patch, to promote local food production and community engagement.
- LU Policy 5.8 Improve park facilities at Winnifred Street Park and Rust City Park to support and enhance community celebrations.
- LU Policy 5.9 Assess the tree canopy coverage in Ruston to establish a baseline, identify priority areas for protection and restoration, and guide strategies to increase coverage, especially in underserved and heat-vulnerable areas.

POLICY CONNECTIONS

Land Use must be planned to accommodate future growth with other elements. The **Land Use Element** and **Housing Element** each include policies and information about projected growth and housing.

The **Capital Facilities and Utilities Element** each includes policies demonstrating how public services and utility infrastructure will serve existing and future land uses.

Land use and transportation must be coordinated to prevent unintended impacts. The **Transportation Element** outlines Ruston's Complete Streets approach, covering streets, bike facilities, sidewalks, on-street public parking, public transit facilities, wayfinding, and lighting.

The **Community Character Element** includes policies to preserve community character while planning land use.

The **Shoreline Element** includes guidance of development within the shoreline jurisdiction.

CITY OF RUSTON WASHINGTON

Chapter 4 Housing



INTRODUCTION

The Housing Element outlines Ruston’s strategy for addressing current and future housing needs while maintaining the city’s unique character. As required by the Growth Management Act (GMA), this element identifies how the city will meet the housing needs of current and future residents across all income levels, household types, and stages of life. It assesses existing housing conditions, forecasts future housing needs, and outlines policies to support a range of housing choices, affordability, and equitable access to housing opportunities. The element works in concert with the Land Use Element to guide how and where the city grows over the next 20 years.

As a largely built-out community with limited physical room for expansion, Ruston must focus on thoughtful infill development, redevelopment, and strategic use of land to meet housing targets. This element supports those efforts while ensuring that housing policy aligns with Ruston’s broader vision for a livable, inclusive, and resilient future.

Housing and VISION 2050

A major purpose of the Housing Element is to ensure the vitality and character of established Ruston residential neighborhoods and plan for future growth. VISION 2050, along with the GMA, recognizes that to meet the demands of a growing and changing population in the central Puget Sound, the region must develop vibrant communities that offer a diverse and well-distributed mix of homes – affordable to both owners and renters across all demographic and income groups. VISION 2050 encourages housing production that meets current and future needs and emphasizes providing homes that are safe, healthy, attractive, and close to jobs, shopping, transit, and other amenities. It also calls for addressing inequities in housing access and minimizing displacement of vulnerable communities.

Ruston's Comprehensive Plan is aligned with these goals. The Multicounty Planning Policies (MPPs) provide additional guidance to municipalities, addressing:

1. Housing diversity and affordability;
2. Jobs-housing balance;
3. Best practices in residential development; and
4. Equitable access to housing and displacement prevention.

These MPPs place an emphasis on preserving and expanding housing affordability, promoting environmentally responsible and high-quality residential development, and ensuring healthy, safe, and inclusive housing choices for all the region's residents. Ruston's Housing Element and policies reflect and support these regional objectives.

Recent Housing Legislation

Since Ruston's last comprehensive plan update, the Washington State Legislature has adopted several significant changes to the GMA aimed at increasing housing supply, promoting affordability, and reducing barriers to housing development.

In 2021, House Bill (HB) 1220 amended the GMA to require cities and counties planning under the Act to update their Housing Elements using data and guidance from the Washington Department of Commerce. The legislation directs jurisdictions to plan for housing that accommodates all income levels, including permanent supportive housing, emergency housing, and emergency shelters.

More recently, in 2023, HB 1337 required cities like Ruston to allow at least two accessory dwelling units (ADUs) on all lots that permit single-family housing. The law also mandates flexible standards to support ADU development – such as allowing detached and converted ADUs, permitting ADUs at the lot line next to alleys, and adopting measures to reduce regulatory barriers like off-street parking requirements or owner-occupancy rules.

These legislative changes guide the city's housing policies and will shape how Ruston plans for a more inclusive, flexible, and attainable housing future.

HOUSING INVENTORY AND FORECAST

Ruston is considered a small city in Washington State, with a 2024 population of 1,065, according to the Washington Office of Financial Management. Over the next 20 years, the city is expected to grow by nearly 450 residents, reaching a projected population of 1,508 by 2044. To accommodate this growth, Ruston is planning for an estimated 169 additional housing units, bringing the total housing stock to approximately 686 units by 2044.

Existing Housing Inventory and Analysis

As of 2024, Ruston is largely built out, with an estimated 521 housing units in 2024 (WA Office of Financial Management). The city's older homes are a valuable asset, with more than one-fifth of the existing housing stock built prior to 1940. These older homes tend to be more affordable and contribute to the city's historic character. Most homes have been well maintained over the years and generally appear to be in fair to good condition. The median home value for owner-occupied units in Ruston is \$808,200, while the median monthly rent is \$2,489. Approximately 44% of the existing owner-occupied units are valued between \$500,000 and \$999,999, and 33% are valued at \$1 million or more.

Pierce County's Housing Action Strategy identifies that the county's greatest housing need is for housing affordable to households earning less than 50% of Area Median Income (AMI); for Ruston, that would mean a household of four earning less than \$30,200. At the time this plan was prepared, the median household income for Ruston residents was about 18% higher than the Pierce County median. See Figures 4.1 and 4.2 for a summary of Ruston's housing inventory and general demographics.

Figure 4.1 Ruston Housing Inventory

Total Housing Units	521
Average Household Size	2.12
Housing Occupancy	
Occupied	96.4%
Vacant	3.6%
Homeowner Vacancy Rate	0.0%
Rental Vacancy Rate	2.3%
Housing Types	
1 unit, detached	58.1%
1 unit, attached	1.1%
2 units	3.0%
3 or 4 units	0.3%
5 to 9 units	5.2%
10 to 19 units	1.9%
20 or more units	29.7%
Other	0.7%
Age of Housing Stock	
Total housing units built 1939 or earlier	31.6%
Total housing units built 2000 or later	43.3%
Median Home Value (owner-occupied units)	\$808,200
Less than \$150,000	3.6%
\$150,000 to \$299,999	1.9%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	17.3%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	43.8%
\$1,000,000 or more	33.3%
Median Rent	\$2,489
Gross Rent as % of Household Income	
Less than 15%	10.9%
15.0 to 19.9%	15.5%
20.0 to 24.9%	41.5%
25.0 to 29.9%	14.0%
30.0 to 34.9%	5.7%
35.0% or more	12.4%

Sources: WA Office of Financial Management; U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2023 5-Year Estimates

Figure 4.2 Ruston General Demographics

Total Population	953
Disability Status	9.2%
Age 65 and Over	23.1%
Race	
One Race	88.3%
White	75.4%
Black or African American	1.5%
American Indian and Alaska Native	1.5%
Asian	7.7%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.0%
Some Other Race	2.2%
Two or More Races	11.7%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	6.0%
Median Age	47.8 years
Under 5 years	3.3%
18 years and over	86.2%
21 years and over	85.5%
62 years and over	31.1%
65 years and over	23.1%
Median Income	\$113,971
Median income in adjacent jurisdictions	
Tacoma	\$83,857
Pierce County	\$96,632
Individuals living below poverty level	7.3%
Population in labor force	61.7%
Unemployed	1.8%
Top Five Industry Sectors	
Educational services, health care and social assistance	25.0%
Finance and insurance, real estate, rental and leasing	24.4%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	9.1%
Public administration	8.3%
Retail trade	6.7%
Occupations	
Management, business, science, and arts	64.2%
Sales and office	17.0%
Service	8.0%
Production, transportation, and material moving	6.3%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance	4.5%

Sources: WA Office of Financial Management; U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2023 5-Year Estimates

Cost-Burdened Households

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) uses a measurement of “cost burden” to determine which subset of a community’s residents are most in need of housing support or most at risk of displacement or housing hardship. A household is considered cost-burdened if they are spending more than 30% of their monthly income on housing costs (including rent and utilities).

In Ruston, 18.1% of rental households spend more than 30% of their household income on rent, while 50.9% of owner-occupied households spend more than 30% of their household income on housing costs. In all, this means about 37.4% of households in Ruston are considered cost-burdened by HUD standards.

Housing Equity Report

In response to recent updates to the Growth Management Act, the City of Ruston completed a Housing Equity Report in 2023. The purpose of the report was to identify and remove barriers to housing choice and opportunity, particularly those experienced by historically underserved and marginalized populations. The analysis focused on identifying any racial disparities, income levels, housing affordability, and tenure patterns to ensure the city’s housing policies and strategies promote equitable outcomes for all residents.

Key findings from the report include:

- Renters in Ruston are more likely to experience housing cost burden than homeowners.
- The majority of homeowners in Ruston are white, while other racial and ethnic groups are underrepresented among owner households.
- Most low-income households in Ruston are white, but cost burden among renters was higher across multiple demographic groups.
- Hispanic or Latino households are more likely to rent and face higher rates of cost burden compared to the citywide average.

- A review of the city’s housing policies identified one policy (FW-22), which prioritized single-family housing, for removal to support broader housing options.

The findings will inform future updates to the city’s housing strategies. The full Housing Equity Report is included in Appendix D.

Displacement Risk Assessment

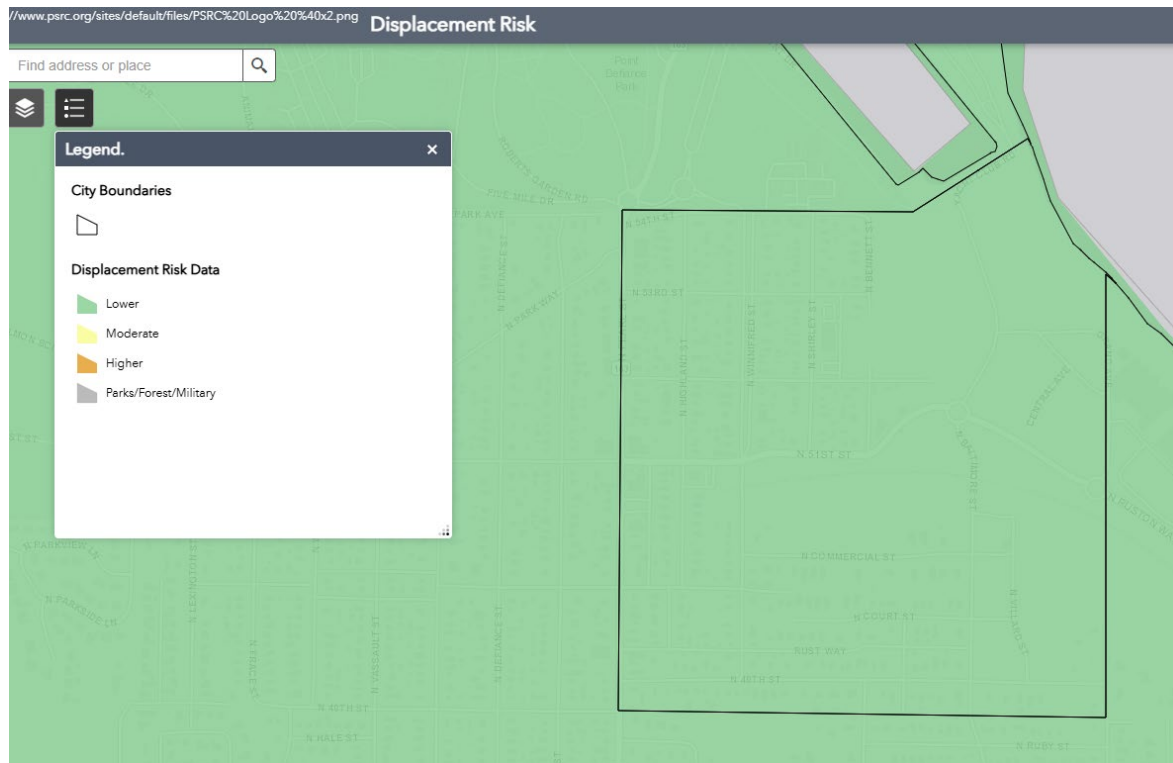
As part of the city’s housing planning efforts, the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) Displacement Risk Mapping Tool was used to assess the potential risk of displacement in Ruston. This tool provides a regional, data-informed approach to identifying areas where households may be vulnerable to displacement due to changing housing conditions or market pressures.

PSRC’s displacement risk index is based on five key indicators:

- **Socio-demographics**, such as income, race/ethnicity, and educational attainment
- **Transportation qualities**, including vehicle access and commute characteristics
- **Neighborhood characteristics**, such as the prevalence of renters and recent population growth
- **Housing conditions**, including cost burden and housing age
- **Civic engagement**, such as voter participation and language barriers

Figure 4.3 illustrates displacement risk across Ruston using this index. The analysis shows that **Ruston is categorized as having low displacement risk** across its neighborhoods. This outcome reflects a combination of factors, including relatively high median incomes and homeownership rates. However, continued monitoring of affordability and housing access will remain important as the city plans for future growth and housing diversity.

Figure 4.3 Ruston Displacement Risk



Source: Puget Sound Regional Council, 2025

Housing Needs and Opportunities

Ruston is a small city with a unique blend of historic charm and recent development, but its current housing mix and demographic trends highlight some clear opportunities – and challenges – for the future. The data presented in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 reveal where Ruston’s housing market stands today, and where it may need to evolve to better meet the needs of residents now and in the years ahead.

Existing Housing Inventory

An analysis of Ruston’s existing housing stock shows the city has a strong presence of both single-family homes and larger apartment buildings – but not a lot of options in between. This limited variety can make it harder for people to find housing that fits their needs, especially as household sizes, incomes, and lifestyles shift.

- The majority of housing stock in Ruston (58.1%) consists of detached single-family homes, while nearly 30% of all units are in buildings with 20 or more units. Smaller-scale multifamily options like duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes make up just 3.3% of the city's housing. These "middle housing" types could help offer more flexible and affordable alternatives that still fit within Ruston's neighborhood character.
- About 32% of Ruston's housing was built prior to 1940, a reflection of its historic roots. At the same time, over 43% of homes were built since 2000, signaling an ongoing wave of infill and redevelopment. This blend of old and new illustrates the city's ability to evolve while also maintaining its sense of place.
- With a homeowner vacancy rate of 0.0% and a rental vacancy rate of just 2.3%, Ruston's housing market is incredibly tight. This low availability can drive up prices, limit choices, and create challenges for residents trying to move into or within the community.
- The median home value for owner-occupied homes in Ruston is \$808,200, and one-third of homes are valued at over \$1 million. Median rent is also high at \$2,489. These costs put many homes out of reach for moderate-income households, renters, and first-time homebuyers – indicating a strong need for more affordable housing options.

Demographics and Future Housing Needs

Ruston's population is aging, incomes are relatively high, and the community includes a range of workers and household types. These characteristics will shape what kinds of housing will be needed in the future, particularly for older adults, lower-income households, and residents who work remotely or need flexible living arrangements.

- With a median age of 47.8 and 23.1% of residents aged 65 or older, Ruston is home to a significant number of older adults. As the population continues to age, more residents may need homes that support aging in place, including smaller units, single-story layouts, ADUs, and accessible features.

- While the median household income (\$113,971) is substantially higher than surrounding areas, about 7.3% of residents still live below the poverty level. This highlights the importance of having a housing supply that serves people across the income spectrum, including essential workers, younger adults just starting out, and seniors on fixed incomes.
- Only 61.7% of Ruston's population is in the labor force, which may be due in part to the city's older age profile. Among those who do work, a large share (64.2%) are in management, business, science, and arts occupations – professions that often support or require work-from-home flexibility. This trend underscores the need for housing options that can accommodate home offices or live-work spaces.
- About 37.4% of households in Ruston are considered cost-burdened by HUD standards, meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on housing. This includes 18.1% of renters and a notably high 50.9% of homeowners, underscoring the need for more affordable housing options across a range of income levels.

Implications for Housing Policy

Ruston's current housing makeup and demographic trends suggest several directions the city could take to support a more balanced and inclusive housing future.

- Ruston can **expand housing diversity** by encouraging the development of middle housing types such as duplexes, triplexes, ADUs, and live-work units. These housing options can provide more flexibility and affordability, filling the gap between traditional single-family homes and larger multifamily developments.
- To **address affordability**, the city can implement strategies that increase access to lower-cost housing, especially for renters and first-time buyers. This could include allowing ADUs as a permitted use, streamlining the process for affordable housing types, and exploring partnerships with housing providers to support the creation of long-term affordable units.

- **Supporting aging in place** will also be increasingly important given Ruston's older population. The city can encourage housing that includes ground-floor living, universal design features, and close proximity to services and public transit – making it easier for older residents to remain in their homes and communities as they age. In addition to promoting age-friendly housing types, the city could support seniors and those with special needs by helping them access state, county and federal loans and grants to repair or maintain their homes. These efforts – along with the potential for local loans or grants to assist low-income seniors – can help enable seniors to comfortably age in place or find desirable alternative housing.
- Ruston can also **encourage compact, walkable development** by focusing new housing near commercial areas and transit connections. This approach can reduce reliance on cars, improve access to amenities, and promote healthy and connected neighborhoods that reflect Ruston's small-town character and vision.

FUTURE HOUSING TARGETS

Ruston is an established, urban city with a small population and limited geographical area. With most land already developed, opportunities for housing growth are primarily limited to modest infill within existing residential neighborhoods. These constraints make it challenging to accommodate a wide range of housing types or support large-scale residential development. However, redevelopment and subdivision opportunities exist in some residential areas, and mixed-use designations – particularly in the Point Ruston Development – offer potential for more affordable and diverse housing options.

Planning for Ruston's future housing needs is essential to support residents across all income levels. The city anticipates reaching approximately 686 housing units by 2044. Redevelopment of underutilized sites and increased building height allowances in strategic locations (see Appendix E – Landmark Opportunity Sites Map) are anticipated to contribute to additional residential capacity. Streamlining the

permitting process to simplify approval of ADUs, live-work units, and other innovative housing types is also expected to help achieve housing targets. Ruston will continue to encourage a variety of housing types where their design and location align with the Comprehensive Plan and the city's Traditional Neighborhood Design principles, with the long-term goal of adopting a form-based code to help ensure new development complements existing neighborhood character. See Figure 4.3 for Ruston's future population, housing, and employment targets.

Figure 4.4 2044 Population, Housing, and Employment Targets

Target	Estimated 2020 Count	2020 – 2044 Growth	2044 Total Allocation
Population	1,055	453	1,508
Housing Units	517	169	686
Employment	532	71	603

Source: PSRC Vision 2050

Accommodating Housing Growth

Ruston has an existing split of about 58% detached and 42% attached housing. While there are currently very few new housing units in the permitting process, a significant percentage of the residential development over the past two decades has consisted of multifamily housing. This trend has helped diversify Ruston's housing stock and the city's ability to offer more affordable home options for a wider range of households.

Ruston's GMA Growth Housing Target, as identified in the Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies, is to add 169 new housing units by the year 2044 (see Figure 4.4). This target is based on housing need forecasts that consider population growth, household trends, and regional planning goals. The city had an estimated 517 housing units in 2020, meaning the total number of housing units in Ruston is expected to reach 686 units by 2044.

To ensure housing is available to a wide range of residents, the 2044 housing target must be allocated across all income levels, from extremely low-income to market-rate households. This distribution helps meet the needs of seniors, workers, families, and vulnerable populations within the community.

For reference, the HUD Area Median Income (AMI) for Ruston and the Tacoma Metro Area is \$120,800 for a family of four. This figure is used to determine income eligibility and affordability levels for subsidized and affordable housing units.

Figure 4.5 2044 Housing Needs by Income Level

	Total	Permanent Housing Needs by Income Level (% of AMI)						
		0-30%		>30-50%	>50-80%	>80-100%	>100-120%	>120%
		Non-PSH	PSH*					
Estimated Housing Supply (2020)	517	18	0	12	102	105	66	214
Housing Allocation (2020-2044)	169	23	31	33	26	11	10	43

Source: Pierce County Housing Allocations, 2023

Note: *PSH = Permanent Supportive Housing

Of the 169 new units, 87 units (over 51%) are designated for households earning below 80% of AMI, including:

- 23 units for extremely low-income households (0–30% AMI),
- 31 units for very low-income households (30–50% AMI), and
- 33 units for low-income households (50–80% AMI).

The remaining housing need includes 26 units for moderate-income households (80–100% AMI), 11 units for households earning 100–120% of AMI, and 21 market-rate units for those earning above 120% of AMI. An additional 10 units of permanent supportive housing (PSH) are also allocated for individuals or families experiencing homelessness or facing disabling conditions.

According to the Pierce County Buildable Lands Report (2022), Ruston has capacity for:

- 33 additional units in the RES zoning district, which primarily accommodates higher-income households, and
- 620 additional units in the MPD zoning district, which has the potential to accommodate low-, moderate-, and high-income households through a mix of housing types.

This available capacity indicates that Ruston has sufficient land to meet and exceed its 2044 housing growth targets, provided that future development supports a diverse range of housing options.

Housing Affordability Tools

Ruston supports Pierce County's Housing Action Strategy and the MPPs in encouraging more housing production to close the existing and projected housing gap – especially units affordable to lower-income households. In Pierce County, the greatest need is for housing affordable to households earning less than 50% of Area Median Income (AMI), especially those at or below 30% AMI. Ruston is working toward meeting minimum recommendations in the following ways:

1. A substantial share of new housing in the past two decades has consisted of attached and multifamily housing types. These units are typically more affordable than single-family detached homes and offer opportunities for moderate- and lower-income households.
2. Ruston collaborates with nonprofit housing developers and regional partners to identify properties suitable for the development of affordable and supportive housing.
3. The city supports future opportunities for transit-oriented development, including coordination with Sound Transit for a potential fixed-route transit line in Ruston connecting to light rail in downtown Tacoma. Such an opportunity would expand regional mobility and access to jobs and services.

4. Ruston is evaluating membership in the Tacoma/Pierce County Affordable Housing Consortium (AHC) or similar organizations to strengthen its capacity to support affordable housing.
5. The Comprehensive Plan's main implementing tool is the city's development code, which applies zoning and development regulations that lend themselves toward affordable housing by focusing on building form over use. The code supports affordability through the following mechanisms:
 - a. **Neighborhood Centers** – which align with the concept of “local centers” as described in VISION 2050 – encourage a mix of housing types near services and amenities, increasing affordability and livability.
 - b. **Landmark Opportunity Sites**, identified throughout the city, allow greater height and density, enabling more diverse and attainable housing options.
 - c. **Innovative housing types** that are inherently more affordable, such as ADUs, duplexes, triplexes, and live-work units, are permitted and encouraged in residential zones citywide, in line with recent state legislation supporting middle housing.
 - d. **Streamlined permitting** for ADUs, live-work units, and middle housing types reduces regulatory barriers and facilitates production of more affordable housing.
 - e. **Development incentives**, such as reduced parking requirements, height bonuses, and flexible density standards, support the creation of more affordable housing in appropriate locations.

FUTURE VISION

Ruston is a close-knit, predominantly residential community that embraces growth while preserving its unique character and sense of place. Housing remains a cornerstone of community identity – safe, healthy, inclusive, and reflective of Ruston's small-town charm within an urban setting. Infill development is thoughtfully integrated, with a variety of housing types that support residents of all ages, incomes, and lifestyles, including families, individuals, and seniors. New

housing fits seamlessly within existing neighborhoods, emphasizing high-quality design, environmental sustainability, and walkability. Accessory dwelling units and live-work spaces provide flexible options that support affordability and contribute to the local economy. Ruston prevents displacement, fosters equitable access to housing, and offers a balanced mix of homes within walking distance of parks, services, and transit. The result is a thriving and inclusive community that honors Ruston’s heritage while meeting the housing needs of today and the future.

GOALS AND POLICIES

Housing goals and policies guide efforts to ensure a range of housing options that meet the needs of Ruston’s current and future residents. These policies support housing diversity, affordability, and quality, while preserving the character of existing neighborhoods. They provide a framework for addressing population growth, promoting equity, and ensuring that housing aligns with the community’s vision for a livable and inclusive Ruston.

Housing **Goal 1:** To support a fuller range of housing types in Ruston’s neighborhoods that offer housing for a variety of income levels and family sizes.

- HO Policy 1.1 Provide flexibility in the city’s form-based code to encourage a variety of housing types citywide.
- HO Policy 1.2 Work with Pierce County, local governments and appropriate agencies to provide and maintain Ruston’s “fair share” of affordable housing.
- HO Policy 1.3 Support the retention and improvement of Ruston’s older housing stock through both private and public initiatives. These homes often offer more affordable options and contribute to the city’s unique character, historical continuity, and neighborhood vibrancy.

- HO Policy 1.4 Support the creation of more affordable housing options in Ruston through a mix of multifamily, ADUs, live-work units, and other innovative housing types. These housing types should be encouraged when thoughtfully designed to complement the character and scale of surrounding uses, and the city may provide architectural examples to guide compatible development.
- HO Policy 1.5 Consider density bonuses for new developments that include affordable housing.
- HO Policy 1.6 Monitor achievement of affordable housing in Ruston through the city's permit tracking system and report progress in the annual Comprehensive Plan update.
- HO Policy 1.7 Streamline the permitting process for innovative housing types, including ADUs, live-work units, duplexes, and triplexes, in an effort to provide more affordable housing options in Ruston.
- HO Policy 1.8 Where possible, eliminate unnecessary or excessive requirements that create barriers to affordable housing, including excessive requirements for siting and operating special needs housing.
- HO Policy 1.9 Encourage small-scale infill housing projects that are compatible with existing neighborhood character and expand housing supply.
- HO Policy 1.10 Encourage housing that is sensitively terraced into hillsides where appropriate, to minimize visual and environmental impacts. Designs should seek to maximize scenic views and incorporate rooftop uses such as gardens, green space, or outdoor recreation areas.

- HO Policy 1.11 Embrace evolving technologies that enable live-work housing models and support Ruston’s vision of a “live, work, play” community.

Housing Goal 2: To encourage transit-oriented developments in Ruston on appropriate sites as a means to provide more affordable housing options.

- HO Policy 2.1 Allow for higher-density mixed-use development near transit stations.
- HO Policy 2.2 Encourage the location of housing – particularly multifamily, ADUs, and live-work units – within a five-minute walk, or as close as feasible, to retail services and public transportation.
- HO Policy 2.3 Consider changes to parking minimums for TOD projects near transit stations to encourage more compact, transit-friendly designs.
- HO Policy 2.4 Identify and evaluate potential sites for transit-oriented development as part of a coordinated future land use study.

Housing Goal 3: To coordinate with and offer assistance to agencies that provide programs and services to needy households, special needs populations, and the homeless in Ruston.

- HO Policy 3.1 Work with and consider membership with the Tacoma/Pierce County Affordable Housing Consortium.
- HO Policy 3.2 Coordinate with Pierce County and regional agencies to improve data collection and sharing on homelessness, housing needs, and service gaps to inform local policies and investments.

- HO Policy 3.3 Develop partnerships with nonprofit housing providers to preserve and create long-term affordable housing units.
- HO Policy 3.4 Identify and reduce barriers in Ruston’s municipal code to allow emergency, transitional, and temporary shelter solutions in appropriate locations.

Housing Goal 4: To promote fair and inclusive access to housing in Ruston.

- HO Policy 4.1 Support housing options, programs, and services that allow seniors and people with disabilities to remain in their homes or neighborhoods as their needs change. Encourage universal design and home retrofits for long-term livability.
- HO Policy 4.2 Support partnerships and regional efforts to accommodate emergency, transitional, and permanent supportive housing in the Tacoma Metro area, particularly those serving individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless.
- HO Policy 4.3 Engage with historically marginalized communities and those most impacted by housing cost burdens in shaping and evaluating housing strategies.
- HO Policy 4.4 Evaluate the impacts of land use decisions and zoning changes on housing supply and affordability, and consider how policies may support inclusive housing opportunities for all income levels.
- HO Policy 4.5 Promote inclusive and sustainable homeownership opportunities for all Ruston residents, with a focused commitment to addressing historic inequities in access to homeownership for communities of color.

Housing Goal 5: To ensure equitable housing opportunities for residents with special needs.

- HO Policy 5.1 Coordinate with nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and housing developers to support the creation of housing options for people with special needs, including seniors, individuals with disabilities, and low-income households.
- HO Policy 5.2 Support the integration of special needs housing throughout Ruston, while recognizing that limited clustering may be appropriate near transit, healthcare, or other essential services.
- HO Policy 5.3 Ensure that Ruston's development regulations allow and provide flexibility for special needs housing in appropriate locations.
- HO Policy 5.4 Promote incentives, partnerships, and zoning strategies that expand the supply of long-term, income-restricted housing for extremely low-, very low-, and low-income households, including those with special needs.
- HO Policy 5.5 Prioritize strategies that close the housing gap for households earning at or below 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI), including zoning reforms, programmatic partnerships, and targeted funding approaches.

POLICY CONNECTIONS

Housing must be planned to meet the needs of current and future residents across income levels and household types. The **Land Use Element** includes policies and growth targets that guide where and how housing can be developed in Ruston.

The **Community Character Element** includes policies that guide the design and scale of housing to ensure compatibility with Ruston's small-town character and neighborhood context.

The **Capital Facilities** and **Utilities Elements** include policies to ensure that housing growth is supported by adequate infrastructure and public services.

The **Transportation Element** supports housing by promoting a connected and multimodal transportation network, improving access to jobs, services, and amenities from residential areas.

The **Shoreline Element** includes policies for residential development within the shoreline jurisdiction to ensure environmental protection and consistency with shoreline goal

Chapter 5

Economic Vitality



INTRODUCTION

Economic vitality is essential to the success of a community such as Ruston which strives to provide a range of employment, retail, service, and recreational opportunities for its residents. Provisions for economic growth, vitality, and a high quality of life are important and should be integrated with the Land Use, Housing, Transportation, Utilities, and Capital Facilities Elements.

The Growth Management Act requires cities to support economic development in line with comprehensive plans. This involves fostering economic opportunities for all citizens, with a special focus on those who are unemployed or disadvantaged. The act also emphasizes the retention and expansion of existing businesses, as well as the recruitment of new businesses. It acknowledges regional variations that affect economic development and encourages growth in areas facing insufficient economic progress. All these efforts should be within the limits of the state's natural resources, public services, and public facilities.

VISION 2050 (psrc.org/planning-2050/vision-2050) emphasizes the crucial role of a strong economy in our overall well-being, encompassing environmental, social, and financial aspects. It acknowledges that a vibrant and diverse economy is essential for funding public services, supporting arts and culture, and fostering community development. In VISION 2050, the Multicounty Planning Policies (MPPs) for economic development are structured around the key themes of business, people, and places.

The focus is on enhancing the region's businesses and employment market by prioritizing job retention, growth, and diversification. Significance is given to small, locally owned businesses, recognizing their role in job creation, potential for providing family-wage jobs, and contributions to the sustainability of the regional economy and prosperity.

VISION 2050 also recognizes that the region's economic well-being relies on the safe and reliable movement of people, goods, services, and information. The plan incorporates provisions to prioritize economic development and allocate transportation funding to economic activity centers.

In essence, Ruston's economic objectives aim to foster a diverse, sustainable, and well-balanced array of economic activities that benefit both residents and visitors. This includes promoting continuous community development with a comprehensive perspective that considers the interconnected aspects of place, people, and the desire for a shared future.

FUTURE VISION

The future vision for the City of Ruston is to become a thriving community with a robust economic core. Ruston aims to attract both tourists and locals seeking opportunities for employment, retail, services, recreation, and leisure. The integration of multimodal transportation is a key aspect, facilitated by the implementation of Complete Streets policies that connect seamlessly with the surrounding community.

Parks and trails in Ruston are strategically linked to pedestrian pathways, residential areas, and commercial establishments, creating a cohesive urban network. The city also provides diverse employment opportunities, including professional office spaces and live-work units that allow employees to work from home or small shops. Importantly, Ruston has managed to accommodate growth while preserving its small-town character.

GOALS AND POLICIES

The city plans to retain and encourage the growth of established businesses and welcome new businesses to Ruston. The city also encourages entrepreneurial opportunities to grow small businesses and contribute to economic activity. The built environment is recognized as a crucial factor in economic sustainability and will continue to emphasize and prioritize elements of good design.

Challenges for the City of Ruston include: the retention of businesses that now compete on a global level; the completion of the Point Ruston project; the redevelopment of the Pearl District; and the provision of adequate housing to support anticipated growth.

Opportunities and strengths in Ruston encompass the current built environment and infrastructure, including streetscapes, sidewalks, utilities, well-established traditional neighborhoods, as well as parks, community events, and activities that promote tourism.

ECONOMIC VITALITY GOAL 1: Ruston has high-quality infrastructure to support economic development.

EV Policy 1.1 Provide the infrastructure needed for businesses and industries to locate in Ruston, including utilities, transportation connections, all supported by appropriate land use regulations.

ECONOMIC VITALITY GOAL 2: Ruston has an array of sustainable employment choices for all income, backgrounds, and age levels, particularly jobs that pay a living wage.

EV Policy 2.1 Encourage the development of employment choices with business stakeholders in the community.

EV Policy 2.2 Support access to employment by encouraging job training, education, and small business development to help residents of all income levels and backgrounds participate in Ruston’s economic growth.

ECONOMIC VITALITY GOAL 3: Ruston has a supportive environment for entrepreneurial opportunities and startup businesses.

EV Policy 3.1	Support home-based businesses and occupations by reviewing and implementing rules that are current and adaptive to new technologies.
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EV Policy 3.2	Work with private commercial owners to provide low-cost incubation space for startup businesses.
EV Policy 3.3	Offer a high quality of life for entrepreneurs, their families, and employees.

ECONOMIC VITALITY GOAL 4: Development standards and regulations are aligned with the needs of new and technology-based businesses.

EV Policy 4.1	Regularly review development regulations, and evaluate the impact of regulations, and the needs of local businesses.
EV Policy 4.2	Create zoning standards for live-work units that encourage the development of new small business spaces.
EV Policy 4.3	Update zoning standards to create a new zoning district named the "Pearl District" from portions of the existing Commercial (COM) and Commercial-Pearl (COM-P) zones, and update zoning standards to create zoning districts named the "Baltimore District", "Marina District", and "Promenade District" from portions of the existing Point Ruston Master Development Plan. Ensure that consistent design standards apply to all existing and newly created districts.
EV Policy 4.4	Recognize that big-box development with surface parking is neither feasible nor compatible with Ruston's small-town character.
EV Policy 4.5	Encourage business practices that are energy efficient, limit waste, and offer improved health outcomes.

ECONOMIC VITALITY GOAL 5: Ruston is full of thriving businesses and is recognized and celebrated as a prime location in the State to live, work, and play.

EV Policy 5.1	Retain and recruit businesses in Ruston’s commercial districts.
EV Policy 5.2	Encourage continued revitalization through appropriate development, redevelopment, and rehabilitation while mitigating potential physical, economic, and cultural displacement of existing businesses.
EV Policy 5.3	Incentivize redevelopment of vacated and/or underutilized commercial properties in the Pearl District.
EV Policy 5.4	Continue the support and encouragement of tourism-based commerce.

ECONOMIC VITALITY GOAL 6: Ruston has a robust retail economy, providing numerous shopping options that attract tourists and are the preferred choices for local residents who opt to shop in the city.

EV Policy 6.1	Work with property owners to develop Ruston’s Pearl, Baltimore, Marina, and Promenade Districts as a well-connected mixed-use urban village that supports both commercial and residential development.
EV Policy 6.2	Support community and cultural festivals, celebrations, and events such as a 5K walk/run, parades, and farmers markets.
EV Policy 6.3	Support temporary closures of Winnifred Street for cultural and community festivals, celebrations, and events.
EV Policy 6.4	Allow temporary food trucks during community festivals, celebrations, and events.

EV Policy 6.5	Recognize the value of temporary food trucks as short-term incubator business strategies for emerging businesses, while providing long term support to “brick-and-mortar” businesses.
EV Policy 6.6	Collaborate with the local chamber of commerce and non-profit agencies to assist historically underserved areas and populations in Ruston with the goal of encouraging equitable redevelopment of underutilized commercial areas.

ECONOMIC VITALITY GOAL 7: Tourism continues to be an important part of Ruston’s economy.

EV Policy 7.1	Work with local and regional partners to encourage tourism and an increase of commerce within the City of Ruston.
EV Policy 7.2	Maintain and improve the built environment of sidewalks, parks, paths, coordinated wayfinding signage, and other public amenities and events that visitors will enjoy and utilize.
EV Policy 7.3	Develop an economic strategic plan that identifies actions needed to encourage economic vitality in Ruston. Specific actions should include both programs and capital projects intended to be added to Ruston’s Capital Facilities Plan.
EV Policy 7.4	Develop a Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Tourism plan that identifies actions needed to encourage community recreation, tourism, and economic vitality in Ruston. Specific actions should include both community programs and capital projects intended to be added to Ruston’s Capital Facilities Plan.

POLICY CONNECTIONS

The **Land Use Element** and **Housing Element** each include policies to accommodate projected growth and ensure sufficient land capacity is available for new jobs and residents.

The **Transportation Element, Capital Facilities Element** and **Utilities Element** each include policies demonstrating how public services and infrastructure will serve existing and future land uses.

The **Community Character Element** includes policies that encourage neighborhood character that is supportive to economic vitality.

CITY OF RUSTON WASHINGTON

Chapter 6

Transportation



INTRODUCTION

The function of Ruston’s transportation system is to facilitate the movement of people and goods, from individuals on foot or bicycle to commuters using transit.

The Growth Management Act calls upon communities to rethink the traditional approach to transportation planning. It emphasizes that land use and transportation planning must be integrated, ensuring that these systems work together and not independently of each other.

Traditionally, communities have responded to traffic congestion and related issues by implementing transportation improvements in a reactive manner. This approach often leads to wider streets, which can encourage higher speeds, increased traffic volumes, and associated impacts such as noise and air pollution. While Ruston’s physical location limits the extent of future growth over the next 20 years, it remains essential to anticipate the need to preserve and maintain existing transportation facilities as infill development occurs in and around the city.

Most importantly, the Transportation Element—along with its goals and policies—provides Ruston residents an opportunity to shape a transportation network that aligns with the city’s unique character. Residents place a high priority on maintaining policies and services that ensure safe vehicular and pedestrian access while also maximizing comfort, well-being, and aesthetic enjoyment.

Growth Management Act Requirements

As described previously, GMA requires comprehensive plans to establish a direct link between land use and transportation. This linkage is accomplished primarily through requirements ensuring transportation facility needs created by specific developments are met at the time permits are issued.

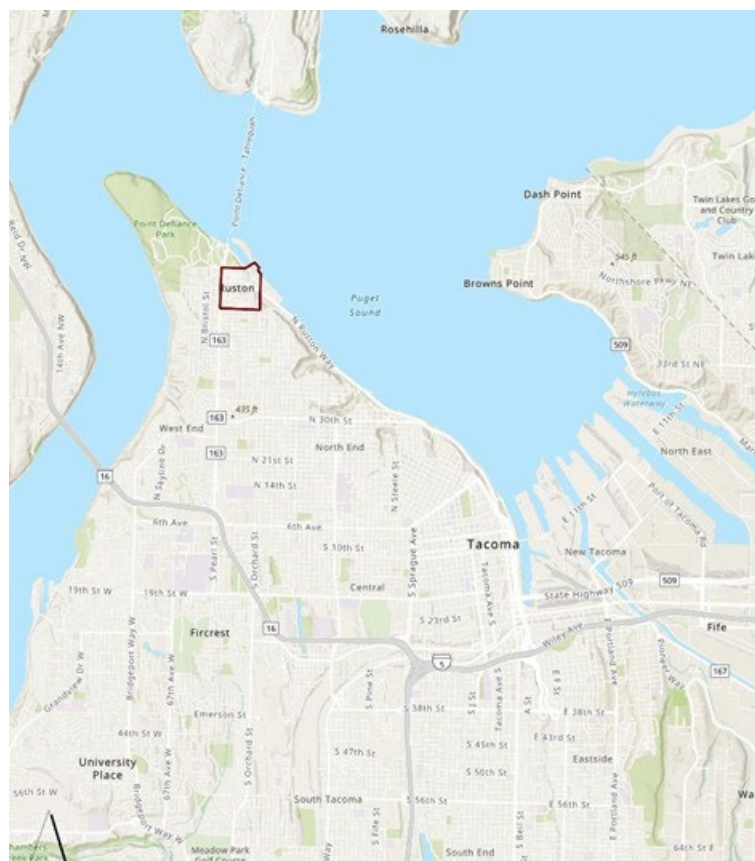
To assist in linking land use and transportation, the GMA requires this Transportation Element to address the following areas:

- A description of the land use assumptions used in estimating travel demand
- Estimated impacts to state-owned transportation facilities

- Identification of facility and service needs based on an inventory of existing facilities, travel forecasts and level of service standards
- A finance section that includes an analysis of funding capabilities, a multi-year financing plan, and a discussion of how additional funding will be raised or assumptions reassessed if funding falls short
- Intergovernmental coordination efforts
- Demand management strategies
- A pedestrian and bicycle component
- Consistency among the Transportation Element, the six-year plan required by RCW 35.77.010 and the ten-year state plan required by RCW 47.05.030

The GMA also requires counties to develop countywide planning policies that ensure consistency across all comprehensive plans within the county. Originally adopted in June 1992 and updated several times since, the Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County include a section on “Transportation Facilities and Strategies.” This section identifies facilities that serve the countywide transportation network, such as the railroad, and all transit stops and shelters. The policies further describe the multimodal network, including roads, public transit facilities, non-motorized facilities, ferries, airports, parking facilities, and facilities related to transportation demand management.

Figure 6.1 Locator Map



Finally, the Countywide Planning Policies require coordination on transportation issues, ranging from level of service standards to funding sources. Consistency with both the Countywide Planning Policies and the requirements of the GMA must be demonstrated. The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) has been designated as both the Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the area that includes Snohomish, King, Kitsap, and Pierce

Counties. The City of Ruston is a constituent member of the PSRC. MPOs are charged with developing regional transportation plans in compliance with federal law, while RTPOs are responsible for developing regional transportation plans under state law. PSRC has adopted a Metropolitan Transportation Plan, known as *Vision 2050*, for the Central Puget Sound area, which includes Ruston. The plan contains policies, goals and funding strategies to address regional transportation issues. Ruston's Comprehensive Plan is consistent with *Vision 2050*, although no regional transportation improvements are identified for Ruston in the regional plan.

Under RCW 36.70A.070, cities are required to inventory state-owned transportation facilities within their jurisdictional boundaries and assess the impact of land use assumptions on those state-owned facilities. Ruston has one state-owned facility within its borders: Pearl Street / SR 163.

Land Use Assumptions

The Transportation Element is based on the assumption that Ruston's land use patterns will remain largely consistent over the next 20 years, as outlined in the Land Use Element. While significant changes are not anticipated, future development regulations incorporate flexible site development strategies including codes that will allow infill development and align with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan. More detailed land use assumptions and population projections are provided in the Land Use and Housing elements.

Ruston's existing street network is expected to accommodate projected population growth and increased use over the next 20 years. As a result, no new roads are proposed. Instead, transportation investments will focus on maintaining and repairing existing infrastructure while enhancing efficiency and accessibility. Ruston is a fully platted and mostly built-out community with a well-connected, walkable street network. Its attractive and well-designed streetscapes include space for transit, bicyclists, pedestrians, and persons with mobility challenges whenever possible. Streets are laid out in a traditional neighborhood grid pattern with alleys. Residents highly value the street grid pattern, as well as the convenience and functionality of alley access to their homes.

Streets in Ruston, referred to as thoroughfares, are classified according to their function: parkways, boulevards, local streets, and alleys. Transportation planning prioritizes pedestrian, transit, and bicycle improvements, recognizing that a walkable environment benefits local business, encourages healthful lifestyles, and strengthens our community. Budgeting for future projects reflects this priority.

The scope of Ruston's traffic analysis is citywide—addressing major intersections and including evaluation of average and peak summer traffic volumes on road segments, an analysis of arterial level of service for Ruston Way corridor, and analysis of intersection operations during the average weekday PM peak hour. Selected intersections within Ruston near the Point Ruston Development were also analyzed for peak summer weekday level of service.

Projected land use and growth assumptions for adjacent areas and jurisdictions, including Pierce County and the City of Tacoma, are addressed in their respective Comprehensive Plans.

EXISTING TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES

Figure 6.2 Inventory of Existing Transportation Facilities and Services

Facility or Service	Description
Airports	None
Water:	
Port	None
Ferries	None
Marinas	None
Surface:	
Freeway	None
State Highway	Pearl Street (SR 163)
City Streets	5.06 miles of improved streets
City Alleys	2.01 miles
HOV	None
Rail:	
Passenger	None
Freight	BNSF (corridor only; no stops)
Other	None
Transit:	
Pierce Transit	Routes 10 and 11; Ruston Runner
Sound Transit	None
Non-motorized Facilities:	
Sidewalks	7.95 miles
Facilities of Statewide Significance	None
Facilities of Regionwide Significance	None

Historical Background

Ruston's transportation system has remained largely unchanged since before its incorporation in 1906. The community established its grid street pattern and alleys in the mid-1800s, developing a company town centered around the smelting industry. Town planners and builders designed a transportation network that allowed residents to live, work, and enjoy recreation within Ruston, with shops, employment, services, and leisure activities all within walking or biking distance.

The Land Use, Housing, and Transportation Elements build upon these enduring principles. The original street grid and alley system remain well-suited for all forms of transportation. Ruston's development regulations align with Complete Streets principles, ensuring that future improvements support safe and efficient travel for pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, and motorists alike while preserving the city's historic street system.

While major capacity improvements to transportation facilities have already been completed, this Element establishes functional design standards to support anticipated growth, enhance pedestrian and cyclist mobility, and promote safe multimodal travel throughout Ruston's street network.

Thoroughfare Network

Thoroughfares (streets) are public spaces for many activities and functions that are important elements of our community. Driving, biking, walking, using mobility devices, navigating with strollers, chatting with neighbors, and parking all occur in streets.

The majority of Ruston's thoroughfare network consists of small residential streets that carry varying but generally low levels of traffic. Baltimore Street, a moderate-volume street, provides a north-south connection between Ruston and Tacoma's residential neighborhoods, ending at Ruston Way and the Point Ruston Development.

Higher-volume streets that serve the community and connect Ruston to the regional transportation system include:

- **Ruston Way** – A collector arterial that runs along the west side of Commencement Bay, linking Ruston to Tacoma’s central business district and I-705 via Schuster Parkway.
- **Pearl Street (SR 163)** – A principal north-south arterial serving as a primary connection from the Vashon Island Ferry Terminal to SR 16 and I-5, serving both Tacoma and Ruston in Pierce County.

The majority of rights-of-way were dedicated in plats around the turn of the 20th century, before Washington became a state. Ruston has approximately 5.06 miles of paved public streets, most with readily available parallel parking and sidewalks on both sides. Travel lanes and right-of-way widths are fairly generous. There are four major types of thoroughfares in Ruston: parkways, boulevards, local streets, and alleys.

- **Parkways** include Pearl Street, 51st Street, Ruston Way, and Baltimore Street; these are the busiest streets and range from 60 to 70 feet in right-of-way width.
- Winnifred Street, the sole **Boulevard**, is moderately busy with a landscaped median and about 100 feet of right-of-way.
- **Local Streets** include all other residential streets, including three dead-end streets serving a limited number of properties; these streets typically have low traffic volumes, with 50 to 60 feet in right-of-way width.
- **Alleys** are typically 16 to 18 feet in width and serve a primarily utilitarian function.

All street edges are vertical curb and gutter. The standard speed limit in Ruston is 25 mph. The speed limit for Ruston Way and Pearl Street is 30 mph.

Thoroughfare Inventory

Thoroughfares ■ **City Limits**

- Parkway
- Boulevard
- Local Street
- Alley

Parcels

City of Ruston WASHINGTON

N Waterfront Dr
Main St
N Commercial St
N Court St
N 49th St
N Ruby St
N Visser St
N Highland St
N Winnifred St
N 52nd St
N 54th St
N 56th St
N 58th St
N 60th St
N 62nd St
N 64th St
N 66th St
N 68th St
N 70th St
N 72nd St
N 74th St
N 76th St
N 78th St
N 80th St
N 82nd St
N 84th St
N 86th St
N 88th St
N 90th St
N 92nd St
N 94th St
N 96th St
N 98th St
N 100th St

Ruston Police Department
Ruston Pointe Delancey
Cinemark Cinema Theaters
Copp Apts

0 250 500 750 1,000 Feet

Disclaimer: The map features are approximate and have not been surveyed. Additional features not yet mapped may be present. The City of Ruston assumes no liability for variations ascertained by formal survey.
Credits: City of Ruston (2025), Pierce County (2025), Esri, (2025)
Map authored by City of Ruston GIS, 2025

Figure 6.4 Thoroughfare Inventory Table

Thoroughfares	Type	Roadway	Sidewalks	Sidewalk Notes	Bike Routes	Parking	Trails	
North of 51 st								
Streets	51st	Parkway	0.36 mi	0.59 mi	North side only East of Bennett	0 mi	Yes (none on South side, East of Winnifred)	0 mi
	52nd	Local Street	0.25 mi	0.44 mi		0 mi	Yes (North side only)	0 mi
	53rd	Local Street	0.25 mi	0.45 mi		0 mi	Yes	0 mi
	Park Ave	Local Street	0.22 mi	0.21 mi	South side only	0 mi	No	0 mi
	Pearl/ SR 163	Parkway	0.25 mi	0.25 mi		0 mi	Yes	0 mi
	Highland	Local Street	0.25 mi	0.47 mi		0 mi	Yes	0 mi
	Winnifred	Boulevard	0.25 mi	0.46 mi		0.50 mi	Yes	0 mi
	Shirley	Local Street	0.25 mi	0.46 mi		0 mi	Yes	0 mi
	Bennett	Local Street	0.15 mi	0.21 mi	West side only North of 53rd	0 mi	Yes	0 mi
	Yacht Club Rd	Local Street	0.13 mi	0.24 mi		0.25 mi	Yes (West side only)	0 mi
	Water Walk Trail	Trail	0 mi	0 mi		0.36 mi	No	0.36 mi
Alleys	Pearl/ Highland	Alley	0.23 mi	0 mi		0 mi	No	0 mi
	Highland/ Winnifred	Alley	0.23 mi	0 mi		0 mi	No	0 mi
	Winnifred/ Shirley	Alley	0.22 mi	0 mi		0 mi	No	0 mi
	Shirley/ Bennett	Alley	0.22 mi	0 mi		0 mi	No	0 mi

Figure 6.4 Thoroughfare Inventory Table (continued)

Thoroughfares		Type	Roadway	Sidewalks	Sidewalk Notes	Bike Routes	Parking	Trails
South of 51 st								
Streets	49th	Local Street	0.49 mi	0.92 mi		0 mi	Yes (South side only)	0 mi
	Court	Local Street	0.26 mi	0.45 mi		0 mi	Yes	0 mi
	50th	Local Street	0.12 mi	0.19 mi		0 mi	Yes	0 mi
	Commercial	Local Street	0.27 mi	0.30 mi	No sidewalks on South side	0 mi	Yes	0 mi
	Ruston Way	Parkway	0.17 mi	0.29 mi		0.34 mi	No	0 mi
	Pearl	Parkway	0.26 mi	0.23 mi	West side of Pearl is in Tacoma	0 mi	Yes	0 mi
	Highland	Local Street	0.19 mi	0.32 mi	No sidewalk in front of Totem Yacht Club	0 mi	Yes	0 mi
	Winnifred	Local Street	0.22 mi	0.41 mi	No curb on Winnifred St Bridge	0 mi	Yes	0 mi
	Shirley	Local Street	0.04 mi	0.04 mi	Missing section on West side		Yes	0 mi
	Bennett	Local Street	0.10 mi	0.11 mi	No sidewalks South of 49th	0 mi	Yes	0 mi
	Baltimore	Parkway	0.32 mi	0.57 mi		0.62 mi	No	0 mi
	Villard	Local Street	0.11 mi	0.23 mi		0 mi	Yes	0 mi
	Orchard	Local Street	0.11 mi	0.08 mi	West side only	0 mi	No	0 mi
Alleys	49th/Tacoma	Alley	0.27 mi	0 mi		0 mi	No	0 mi
	Rust Way	Alley	0.33 mi	0 mi		0 mi	No	0 mi
	50 th Place	Alley	0.04 mi	0 mi		0 mi	No	0 mi
	Commercial/Court	Alley	0.10 mi	0 mi		0 mi	No	0 mi
	Pearl/Highland	Alley	0.12 mi	0 mi		0 mi	No	0 mi
	Highland/Winnifred	Alley	0.12 mi	0 mi		0 mi	No	0 mi
	Highland/Argyle Place	Alley	0.06 mi	0 mi		0 mi	No	0 mi
	Argyle Place	Alley	0.06 mi	50 ft		0 mi	No	0 mi
Totals (miles)			7.07	7.95		2.07		0.36

Existing Traffic Conditions

Traffic volumes in Ruston have remained moderate over recent decades, with the highest congestion occurring along major arterials serving regional destinations such as Point Defiance Park and the Vashon Island ferry terminal. The majority of through traffic originates along Ruston Way, traveling up North 51st Street, Pearl Street, and Baltimore Street.

Ruston's roadway network is integrated into the greater Tacoma system, but due to its location at the northern edge of the city, it does not experience high regional traffic volumes. While congestion is not a widespread issue, growth projections indicate the city's population is anticipated to increase by about 42% over the next 20 years. This anticipated growth underscores the need for proactive transportation planning, particularly along key corridors. Plans to improve arterial transportation facilities have been put in place as described in the Transportation Element.

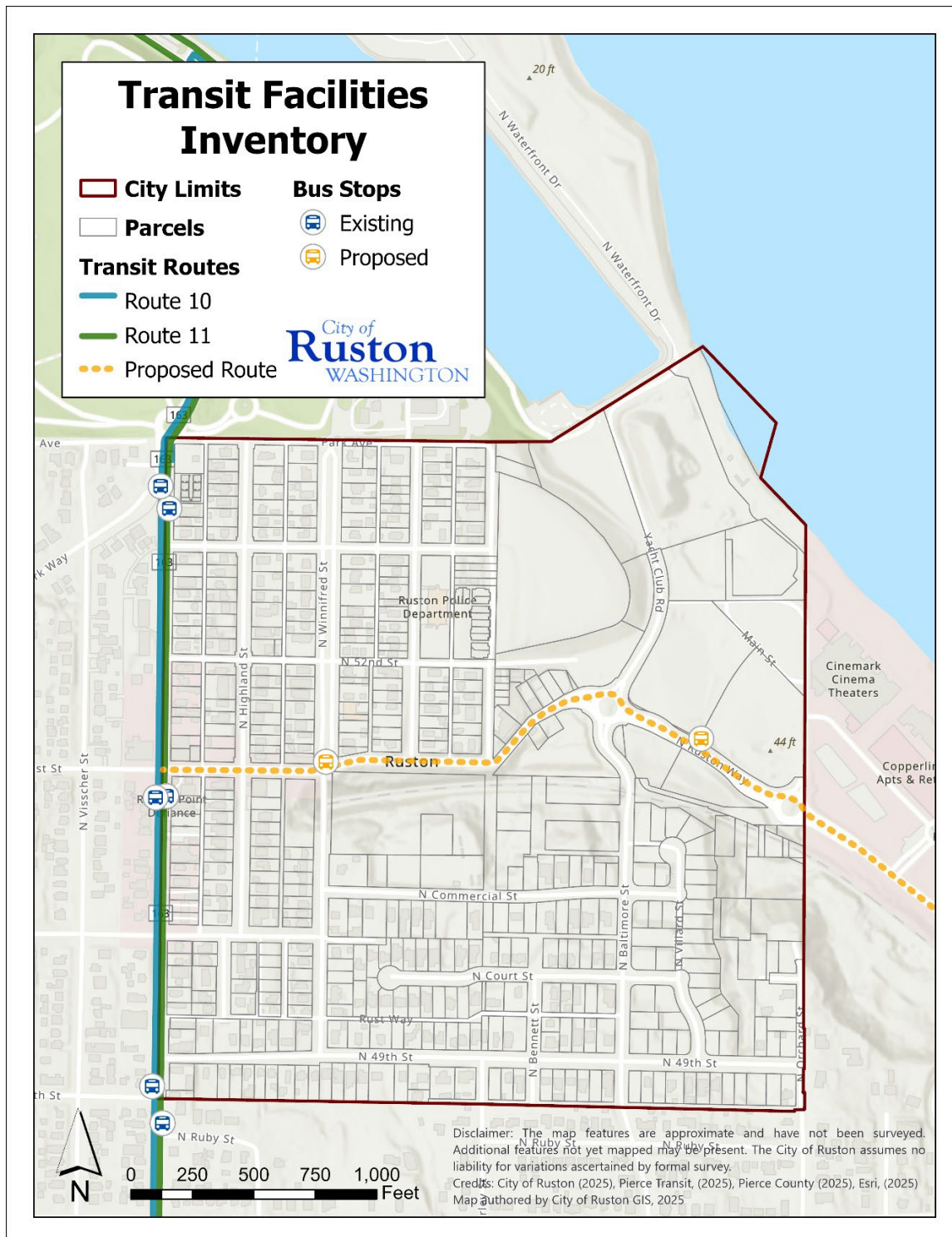
Transit Facilities and Services

Pierce Transit provides bus service in Ruston. Route 11 connects the Vashon Ferry Landing to downtown Tacoma and the Tacoma Dome Station, traveling through Ruston along Pearl Street. The two stops on Pearl Street are within walking distance for many Ruston residents. Route 10 follows a similar path from the Vashon Ferry Landing but continues south along Pearl Street to the TCC Transit Center via North 26th Street, Vassault Street, and Highlands Parkway. A bus stop/shelter is planned on Ruston Way and Central Avenue, with construction concurrent with the Point Ruston Development.

In addition to fixed-route bus service, Pierce Transit's Ruston Runner offers on-demand public transportation in the waterfront recreation zone along Ruston Way. This service allows riders to request point-to-point trips via a smartphone app at standard transit fares. Using vans instead of full-size buses, the Ruston Runner provides a connection between Point Ruston and downtown Tacoma, enhancing access to jobs, dining, shopping, and regional transit hubs.

City of Ruston

Comprehensive Plan Update | Page 94



Railroad

The railroad in Ruston began in the mid-1800s with the Tacoma Eastern Railroad's 3-foot narrow-gauge track, a two-mile logging route from a shallow-water wharf at Commencement Bay to a local sawmill. Today, Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) owns and operates the rail corridor, a vital link to the global market. BNSF's main line runs roughly parallel to North 51st Street through the city, but Ruston has no railroad loading or maintenance facilities, and no passenger or freight trains stop within city limits (see Figure 6.5 – Transit Facilities).

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

Ruston prides itself on being a walkable and bike-friendly community where residents use sidewalks, trails, and bike routes for recreation, socializing, and daily travel. Walking and cycling can be very pleasant and enjoyable in Ruston, and most streets have sidewalks, although some could benefit from widening to 7–10 feet and additional buffering from traffic to improve safety and comfort.

The Waterwalk, a paved multiuse trail along the shores of Commencement Bay (0.36 miles of which is within city limits), provides a scenic route for pedestrians and cyclists. Planned connections through Promontory Hill Park, Park Avenue, 52nd Street, and Yacht Club Road will further enhance pedestrian mobility throughout the city. Future improvements may also include a new connection across Rust Park to sidewalks on Baltimore Street (see Figure 6.6, Primary Pedestrian Connectivity Routes and Figure 6.7, Bike Routes Inventory Map).

This Comprehensive Plan prioritizes the development of pedestrian and bicycle facilities as essential components of Ruston's transportation network. These facilities are not secondary considerations, but high-priority infrastructure for promoting active transportation and enhancing the quality of life for residents. Improving pedestrian and bicycle connections will not only strengthen mobility but also promote social interaction, increase neighborhood security, improve street aesthetics, and foster a greater sense of community. This plan encourages:

- Prioritizing pedestrian and bicycle facilities in all transportation projects;

- Preserving and enhancing the existing street grid for both pedestrian and bicycle access;
- Expanding and maintaining sidewalks and bike lanes throughout the city;
- Adding planting strips, bike lanes, and other buffers to separate non-motorized users from vehicular traffic; and
- Retaining on-street parking as a buffer between pedestrians, cyclists, and traffic.

DRAFT

Figure 6.6 Primary Pedestrian Connectivity Routes



Figure 6.7 Bicycle Facilities Map



RUSTON TRANSPORTATION NETWORK STANDARDS

Ruston's transportation network is designed to support safe and efficient travel for all users. This section outlines the city's different thoroughfare types and the standards for how they should be designed to ensure they accommodate a balance of vehicle, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit needs. By integrating Complete Streets principles, Ruston aims to create a connected and accessible transportation system that makes the city more livable and improves safety for all modes of travel. These guidelines provide a clear approach to designing and improving streets in a way that supports the city's goal of a vibrant and welcoming community.

Thoroughfare Typologies and Standards

Ruston's thoroughfares fall into four primary categories, each serving a distinct purpose and prioritizing specific uses.

- **Parkways** are intended to connect Ruston to the region, featuring wider lanes and higher travel speeds.
- **Boulevards** integrate transportation and public space, balancing vehicle movement with scenic and recreational value.
- **Local Streets** balance all uses of the street, emphasizing pedestrian comfort and on-street parking while accommodating vehicle access.
- **Alleys** are more utilitarian in nature, providing access to garages, utilities, and waste collection.

To support these different functions, tailored design standards are necessary. The following sections outline minimum, maximum and preferred standards for each thoroughfare type.

Parkways

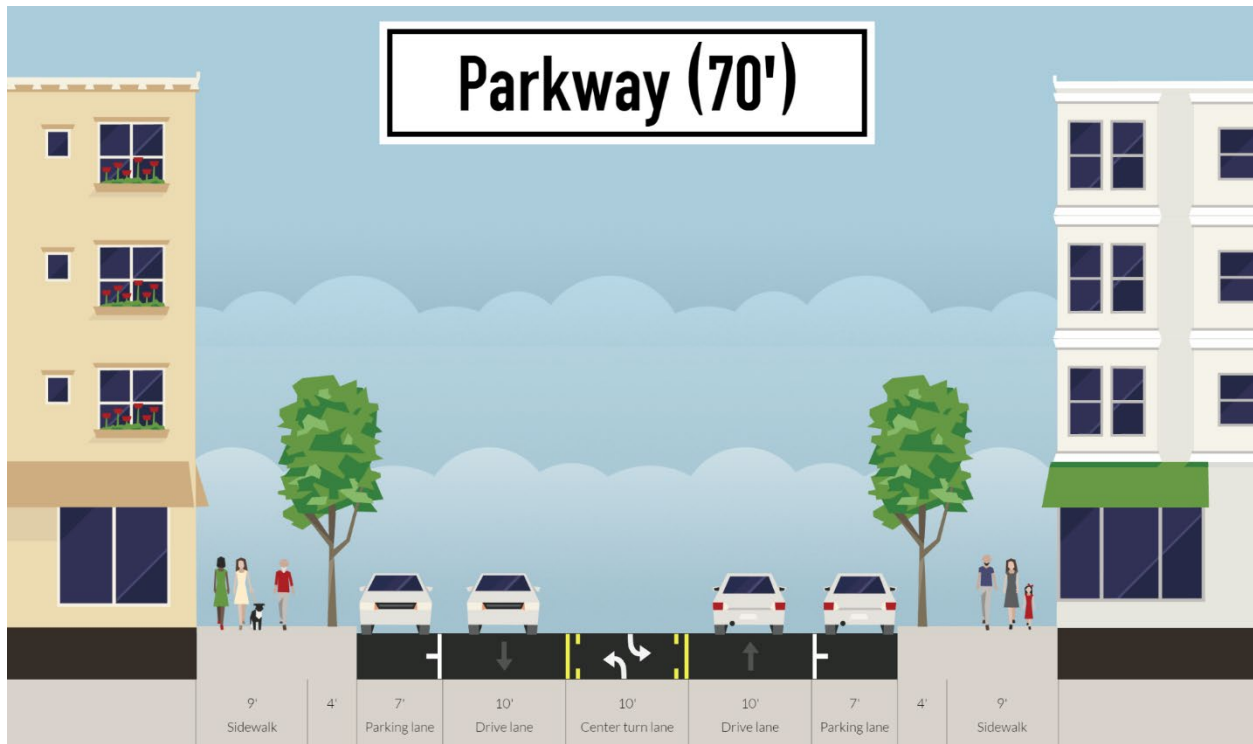
Ruston's Parkways range from 60 to 70 feet in width. The preferred design, as illustrated in the cross-sections on the following page, prioritizes maintaining as much on-street parking as possible to serve as a physical buffer between pedestrians and traffic. If space constraints arise, reducing or eliminating the center turn lane (or converting it to a landscaped median) is preferred over narrowing sidewalks or planting strips or removing on-street parking.

Parkway Standards

	Minimum	Maximum	Preferred
Design Speed	N/A	30 mph	25 mph
Travel Lane	9'	10'	9' (with 5' bike lane)
Bike Facilities	N/A*	N/A	5' bike lane, bike storage racks near intersections
On-Street Parking	N/A	7' parallel	7' parallel
Street Trees	4' in grates	N/A	4' in grates
Street Lights	Yes	N/A	Yes
Sidewalk	6' (for 60' right-of-way width) / 7' (for right-of-way widths 65'+)	N/A	12'–20'
Frontage Zone	N/A	N/A	3'–5' (along commercial/mixed-use frontages only)

*See Bicycle Facilities Map (Figure 6.7) for designated bike routes. A minimum 12' sharrows lane is required where future bike routes are designated on a Parkway, with a 5' bike lane preferred when space is available.

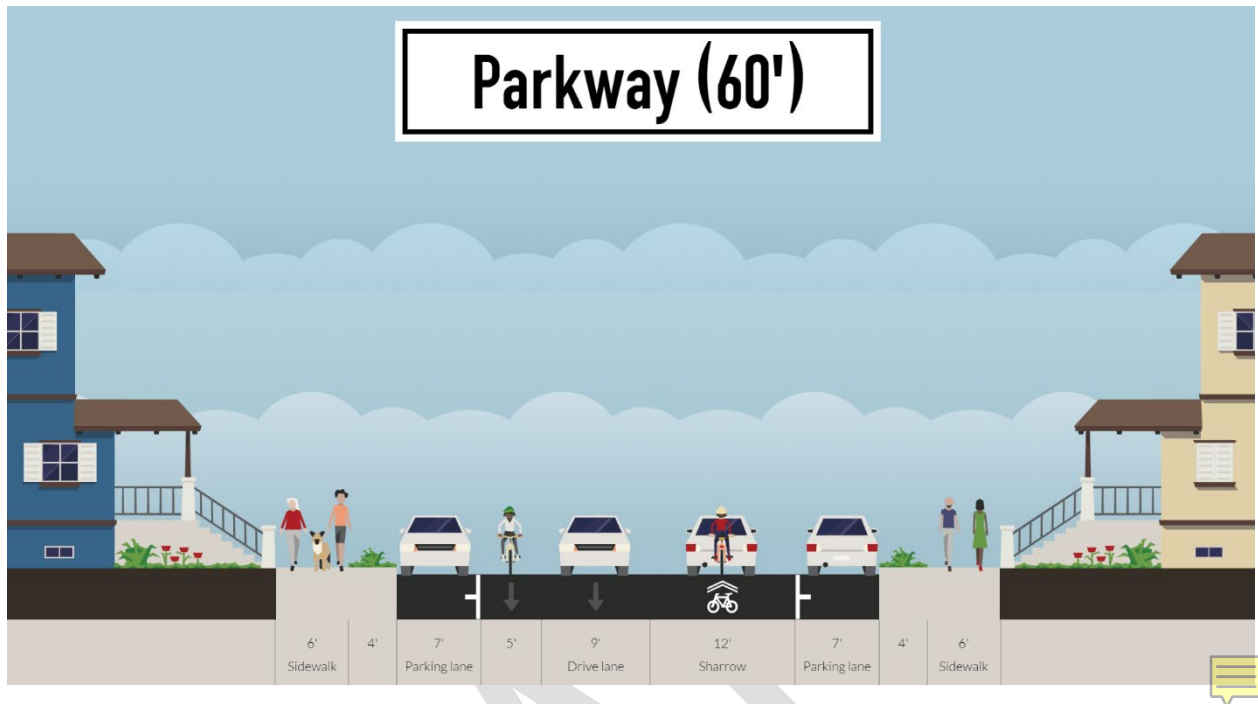
Parkway Example Cross-Section – 70' Right-of-Way Width



Parkway Example Cross-Section – 65' Right-of-Way Width



Parkway Example Cross-Section – 60' Right-of-Way Width



Boulevards

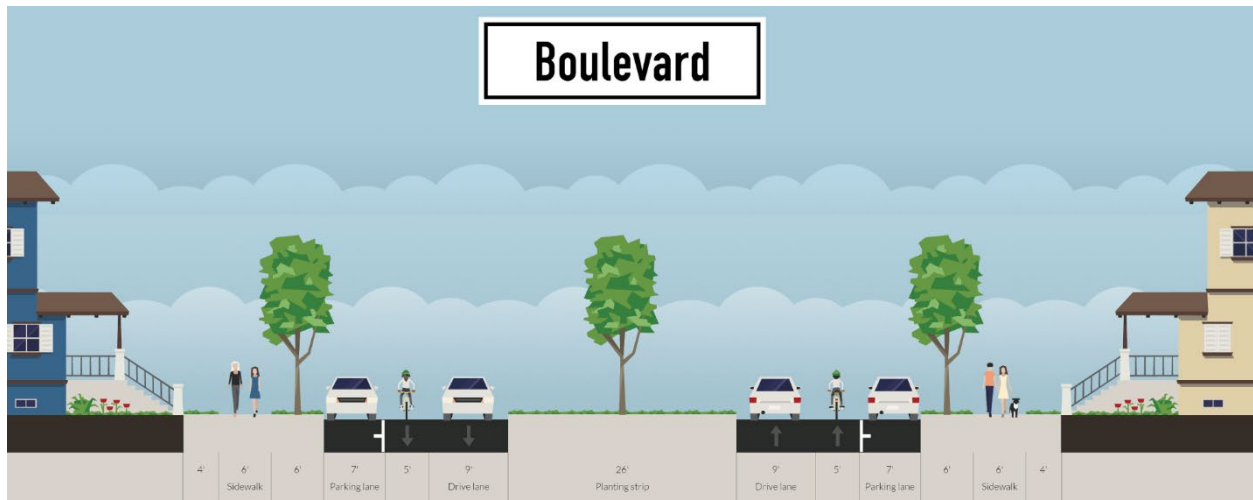
Ruston's sole Boulevard, Winnifred Street (between 51st Street and 54th Street/Park Avenue), features a 100-foot right-of-way with a large center island used as a park. Due to the wide right-of-way typical of a Boulevard, a potential future alternative could involve shifting all lanes to one side, freeing up space on the opposite side for the construction of a large plaza on the opposite side, as shown in the cross section labeled "Boulevard/Town Square" on the following page.

Boulevard Standards

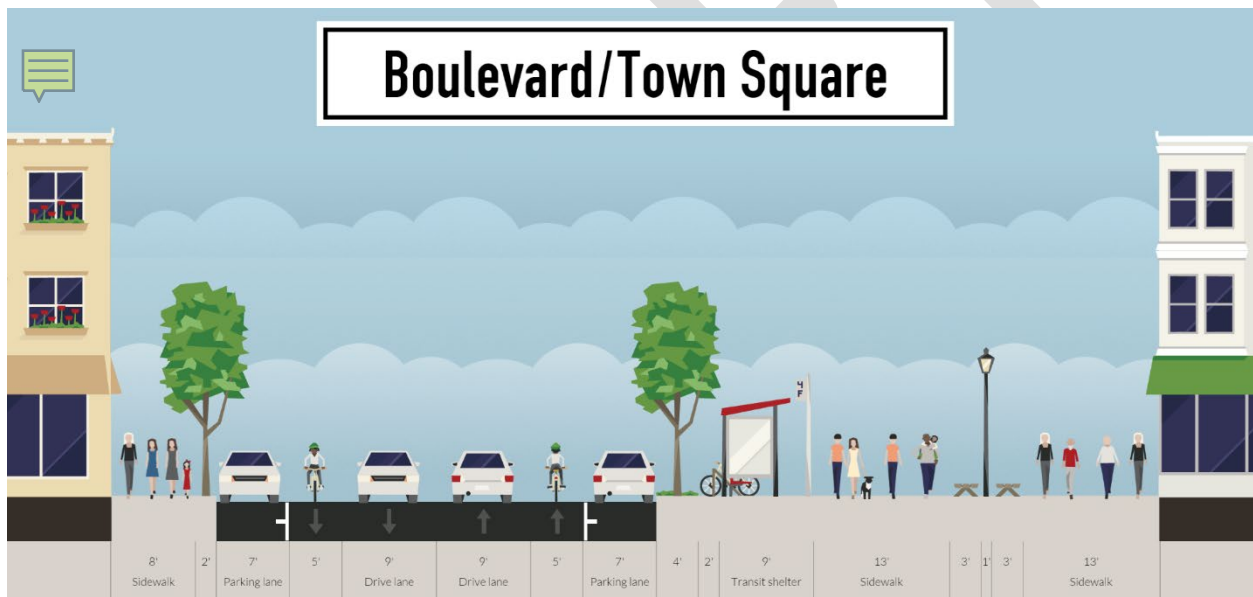
	Minimum	Maximum	Preferred
Design Speed	N/A	25 mph	20 mph
Travel Lane	9'	10'	9' (with 5' bike lane)
Bike Facilities	N/A*	N/A	5' bike lane, bike storage racks near intersections
On-Street Parking	N/A	7' parallel	7' parallel
Street Trees	4' in grates / 6' in planter strips	N/A	4' in grates
Street Lights	Yes	N/A	Yes
Sidewalk	6' (adjacent to residential uses) / 8' (adjacent to commercial uses)	N/A	6' (residential), 8' (commercial), 50' as plaza
Frontage Zone	N/A	N/A	3'–5' (along commercial/mixed-use frontages only)

*See Bicycle Facilities Map (Figure 6.7) for designated bike routes. A 12' sharrow lane is required where future bike routes are designated on a Boulevard, with a 5' bike lane preferred when space is available.

Boulevard Example Cross-Section



Boulevard/Town Square Example Cross-Section



Local Streets

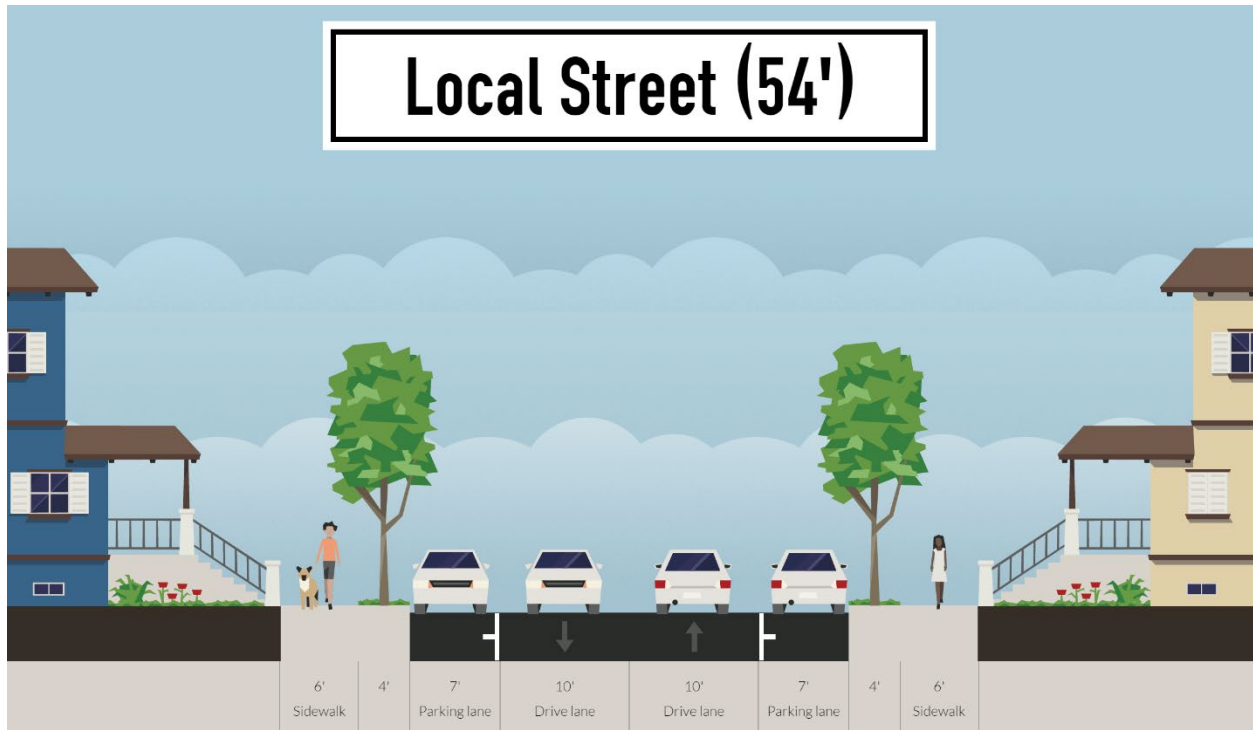
Ruston's Local Streets range from 50 to 70 feet in width. The preferred design, as illustrated in the cross-section on the following page, prioritizes maintaining as much on-street parking as possible to serve as a pedestrian buffer. Where narrower widths limit the design of the cross-section, reduction and/or combination of the landscape strip with the sidewalk by placing street trees in grates is preferred over elimination of on-street parking. When additional right-of-way is available, priority should be given to achieving the preferred standards described below and reverse angle parking or bike lanes should be considered.

Local Street Standards

	Minimum	Maximum	Preferred
Design Speed	N/A	25 mph	15 mph
Travel Lane	9'	10'	9' (with 5' bike lane)
Bike Facilities	N/A*	N/A	5' bike lane*
On-Street Parking	7' parallel on at least one side of the street	N/A	7' parallel on both sides of the street, reverse angle parking where right-of-way width allows
Street Trees	4' in grates	N/A	4'–6' in planter strips
Street Lights	Yes	N/A	Yes
Sidewalk	5'	N/A	6'+
Frontage Zone	N/A	N/A	3'–5' (along commercial/mixed-use frontages only)

*See Bicycle Facilities Map (Figure 6.7) for designated bike routes. A 12' sharrow lane is required where future bike routes are designated on a Local Street, with a 5' bike lane preferred when space is available.

Local Street Example Cross-Section



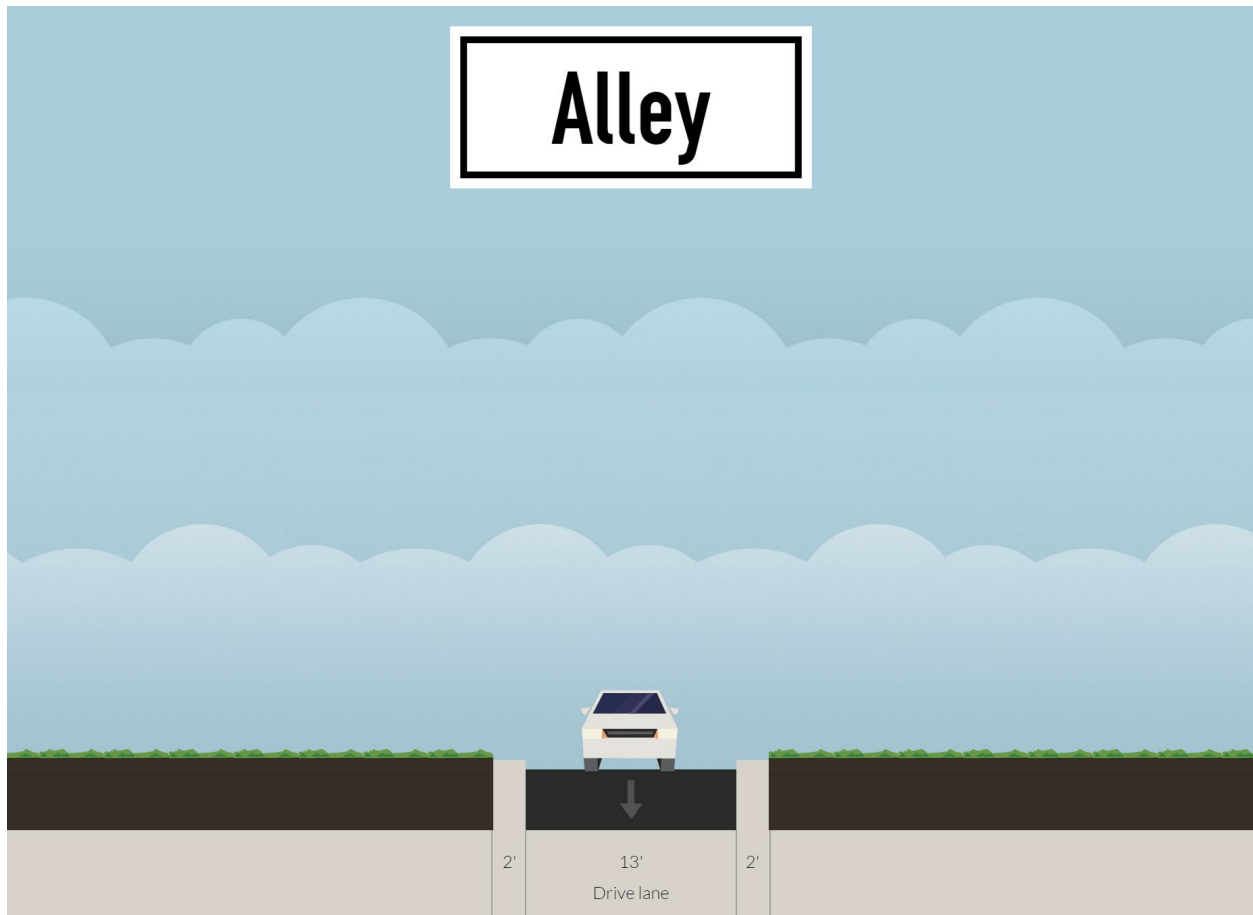
Alleys

Ruston's alleys typically range from 16 to 18 feet in width, with a minimum 10-foot paved driving surface. A wider paved driving surface is preferred to support utility and waste collection access. Where the driving surface is less than 12' wide, undergrounding utilities should be considered to eliminate pole obstructions in the drive aisle.

Alley Standards

	Minimum	Maximum	Preferred
Design Speed	N/A	10 mph	5 mph
Travel Lane	10'	N/A	13' with 2' gravel shoulders
Bike Facilities	N/A	N/A	N/A
On-Street Parking	N/A	N/A	N/A
Street Trees	N/A	N/A	N/A
Street Lights	N/A	N/A	Yes
Sidewalk	N/A	N/A	N/A
Frontage Zone	N/A	N/A	N/A

Alley Example Cross-Section



Multi-Use Trails

Ruston's only Multi-Use Trail currently exists along the Ruston waterfront and is approximately 100 feet wide (including landscaping and shoreline access). Although the trail is owned by the City of Tacoma, it is subject to City of Ruston standards, including those found in the design standards for the Point Ruston Development. Other future trails and multi-use paths are proposed to connect Pearl Street to the waterfront via 54th Street (Park Avenue), and along the north side of Rust Park between Winnifred Street and Baltimore Street.

Multi-Use Trail Standards

	Minimum	Maximum	Preferred
Design Speed	N/A	N/A	N/A
Travel Lane	N/A	N/A	N/A
Bike Facilities	Yes	Yes	Yes, with adequate width for pedestrians and cyclists
On-Street Parking	N/A	N/A	N/A
Street Trees	Yes	N/A	4' in grates / planting strips adjacent to trail, except where water views would be blocked (in which case low shrubs may be used in lieu of trees)
Street Lights	Yes	N/A	Yes
All-Weather Walking Surface	20' within Shoreline Jurisdiction / 10' elsewhere	N/A	10'–20'+
Frontage Zone	N/A	N/A	N/A

Multi-Use Trail Example Cross-Section



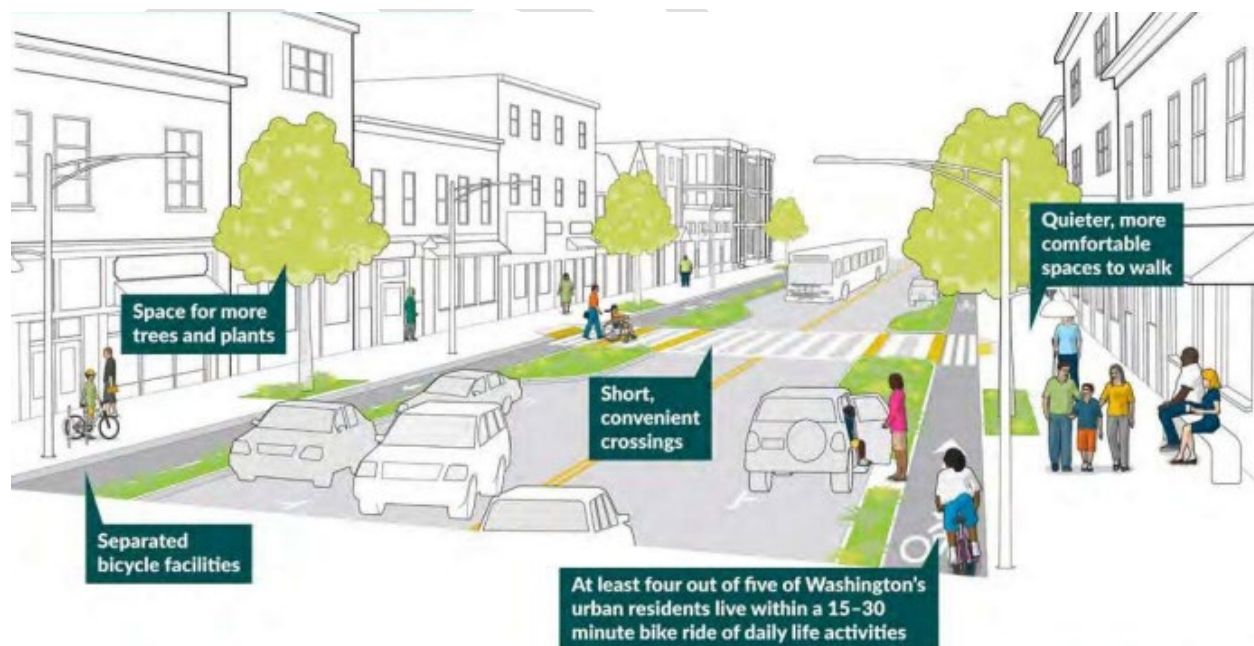
Complete Streets Design

Ruston recognizes that streets and thoroughfares serve more than just vehicles—they are vital public spaces that should support the mobility of all residents. To achieve this, the city integrates Complete Streets design into its transportation planning (see Figure 6.8 – Benefits of Complete Streets for All Users). This approach prioritizes safe, multimodal transportation options, ensuring that everyone, regardless of how they travel, can access daily needs conveniently and safely. By designing streets that accommodate pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, and vehicles, Ruston aims to reduce car dependency, foster walkable neighborhoods, and enhance overall community quality of life. Below are some of the key principles of Complete Streets design that Ruston strives to incorporate into its thoroughfares.

Walkable Neighborhoods & Safe Streets

Neighborhoods should be designed around a five-minute walking radius (about a quarter mile), ensuring residents can easily reach parks, stores, and civic spaces. This not only encourages active lifestyles but also reduces vehicle trips. Streets should prioritize pedestrian and bicycle routes, guiding future improvements and public investments.

Figure 6.8 Benefits of Complete Streets for All Users



Source: Washington State Department of Transportation Complete Streets Guidance

Streets as Public Spaces

Streets are more than just transportation corridors; they are vital public spaces that support movement, commerce, and social activity. Ruston's established street grid—with narrow lanes, sidewalks, and on-street parking—naturally promotes a balanced, multimodal transportation network.

Expanding Mobility Options

- **Public Transit Improvements:** As Ruston grows, transit will play a greater role in connecting neighborhoods. While current bus routes serve Pearl Street, future plans should include transit shelters at major intersections and expanded service along Ruston Way and 51st Street. Enhancing transit stops will improve the rider experience.
- **Bicycle-Friendly Infrastructure:** Ruston is a key link for cyclists traveling to Point Defiance and the Vashon Island Ferry. Safe, well-marked bike routes connecting Ruston, Tacoma, and Point Defiance are essential. Bike lanes should be prioritized over sharrows, with clear markings and green paint for visibility and safety. Sharrows may be used for downhill streets but should be avoided on uphill routes. Where possible, the position of bike lanes and parallel parking lanes can be swapped to create a buffer zone for bicyclists separated from the vehicular travel lanes.
- **On-Street Parking:** On-street parking supports local businesses, acts as a buffer between pedestrians and traffic, and reduces the need for off-street parking. Ruston will continue to preserve and expand on-street parking where feasible.

Designing a Pedestrian-Friendly Environment

- **Creating Comfortable Street Enclosures:** The relationship between street width and building height affects how enclosed and pedestrian-friendly a space feels. Narrower streets with taller buildings on either side tend to create a more inviting, human-scale environment that encourages walking. This kind of street enclosure helps define the space, making it feel safer and more comfortable for pedestrians, while reducing the dominance of car traffic in the area.

- **Enhancing the Pedestrian Experience:** A well-designed sidewalk consists of three key zones:
 - The Frontage Zone: Where storefronts, awnings, and outdoor seating interact with the street.
 - The Pedestrian Through Zone: A clear, accessible walking path.
 - The Street Furnishing Zone: A buffer between pedestrians and traffic with landscaping, benches, lighting, and bike racks.
- Other important elements include:
 - Mid-block crossings and alley access to improve pedestrian connectivity.
 - Weather protection features (awnings, canopies) to increase comfort.
 - Active facades with doors and windows to create visual interest and promote safety by encouraging "eyes on the street."

Building a More Livable Ruston

By prioritizing walkability, safe street design, multimodal transportation, and vibrant public spaces, Ruston can grow sustainably while maintaining its small-town charm. Thoughtful planning and investment in pedestrian-friendly infrastructure will ensure that Ruston remains a connected, accessible, and high-quality place to live. The general thoroughfare minimum standards provided in the following section provide a framework for implementing these complete streets principles in Ruston.

General Thoroughfare Streetscape Standards

The following general thoroughfare streetscape standards complement the Complete Streets guidelines outlined above and apply regardless of thoroughfare type. These standards aim to create a safe, accessible, and multimodal transportation network that prioritizes pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users alongside vehicles.

Roadway Dimensions and Specifications

Vehicle Travel Lanes

All vehicle travel lanes should be limited to a maximum width of 10 feet, with 9-foot lanes preferred when combined with 5-foot bike lanes. This will help reduce vehicle speeds and prioritize safety for all users.

Design Speed

Except for parkways, all streets should have design speeds of 25 mph or less.

- Parkway may have design speeds up to 30 mph.
- In residential areas, design speeds between 15 and 20 mph are preferred.

Bulb-Outs and Traffic Calming Features

When installing bulb-outs (curb extensions), rain gardens, or other traffic calming features, the removal of on-street parking should be kept to a minimum. Priority for bulb-out placement should be given to street intersections, particularly at the ends of on-street parking aisles. Turning radii should be minimized at all intersections, with a maximum preferred radius of 10 feet.

Crosswalk Widths and Locations

Crosswalk widths should match the width of the travel lanes they are intended to cross.

- To improve pedestrian connectivity, the turning radii of vehicle travel



Crosswalk bulb-outs and surface treatment, photo by nacto.org

lanes should be minimized. A maximum turning radius of 10 feet is recommended.

- Crosswalks should be installed at all street intersections.
- For longer block faces, such as Pearl Street between 50th and 51st or Commercial Street between Winnifred and Baltimore, mid-block crossings should also be provided.

On-Street Parking

On-street parking is the preferred method for buffering pedestrians from vehicle travel lanes and should be maintained on existing streets. If parking is removed, replacement spaces should be provided nearby.

- Parallel parking is most common in Ruston and should be provided on at least one side of every street, with parking on both sides preferred.
- Where street widths permit, reverse-angle parking should be constructed to enhance safety and convenience.
- 90-degree perpendicular parking is prohibited due to its “parking lot” feel and the safety risk it poses, as it requires motorists to back out into travel lanes.
- Where possible, consider swapping the positions of parallel parking and bike lanes, placing the bike lanes between parked vehicles and the sidewalk. This allows for the economical creation of protected bike lanes, improving cyclist safety while minimizing the need for additional space.

Pedestrian Facilities

Sidewalks

The minimum sidewalk width is 5 ½ feet, with 6 feet preferred, regardless of the thoroughfare type.

- **Frontage Zone:** In locations where the minimum width is utilized adjacent to mixed use or commercial



Sidewalk with frontage zone, pedestrian through zone, and street furnishing zone

development, an additional sidewalk frontage zone of 3 to 5 feet should be included as part of development approval or incorporated into the zoning standards.

- **Pedestrian Through Zone:** The pedestrian through zone should be 5 ½ to 7 feet wide in residential areas, and 8 to 12 feet in mixed-use or commercial areas.
- **Street Furnishing Zone:** In residential areas, the street furnishing zone should be at least 3 feet wide (4 feet preferred) to accommodate street trees and lighting. In mixed-use or commercial areas, the furnishing zone should be at least 4 feet wide (8 feet preferred) to accommodate additional furnishings like café seating, bike racks, bus shelters, and trash receptacles.

Buffering from Travel Lanes

All pedestrian areas should be buffered from vehicle travel lanes with:

- A minimum 4-foot landscape strip with street trees and lights, or
- Continuous parallel parking, or
- A combination of both to create a continuous buffer.

This buffer enhances pedestrian safety and comfort by creating a more walkable environment.

Weather Protection

For mixed-use or commercial frontages, weather protection should be provided for at least 75% of the façade length, projecting at least 6 feet over the sidewalk.

- Awnings and canopies are the preferred method for providing weather protection.
- The city should work with property owners to allow colonnades to encroach over the public sidewalk, providing both weather protection and increased visual interest while allowing more efficient use of available space.

Paving Materials and Patterns

All sidewalks should either be finished with the city's traditional 2' x 2' scoring pattern or paved with brick pavers.

- Stamped concrete is acceptable when using integral colors in gray or brown tones, with red prohibited as it typically fades to pink.
- Surface painting of asphalt to simulate brick or other paving materials is not acceptable.

Crosswalks should be visually distinct from the roadway surface.

- Pavers, or integral colored concrete in gray or brown tones, are preferred for greater aesthetic appeal in crosswalk paving.
- Thermo-plastic white striping is also acceptable.

Bicycle Facilities

Bicycle facilities should be provided as shown on the Bicycle Facilities Map (see Figure 6.7).

- Bike lanes should be prioritized over sharrows, with clear markings and green paint for visibility and safety. However, sharrows may be used in situations where space is limited.
 - If there is only room for a sharrow/bike lane combination on a particular street, place the sharrows on the downhill side and the bike lane on the uphill side.
- Whenever possible, bike lanes should be physically separated from vehicle travel lanes.
 - Where feasible, consider swapping the positions of



Sharrow, photo by BikeHub.ca



Protected bike lane, photo by City of Missoula, MT

the bike lane and parallel parking lane to create a protected buffer for bicyclists, separating them from vehicular traffic.

- Preferred dimensions:
 - Sharrow lanes should have a minimum width of 12 feet and a maximum width of 14 feet.
 - Bike lanes should have a minimum width of 5 feet.
- Bike racks should be provided near street intersections along mixed-use or commercial frontages.



Protected bike lane, photo by Oregon Transportation Research and Education Consortium



Separated bike lane, photo by City of Austin, TX

Transit Facilities

Installation and modification of transit stops and shelters should be coordinated with local and regional transit authorities. When warranted, the SEPA Environmental Review process may be used to require transit facilities as mitigation for development impacts on the transportation network.

- When necessary due to development-related impacts or increasing demand, place new transit shelters as specified on the city's transit facilities map (see Figure 6.5). Incorporate distinct architectural design for the proposed transit facility located at the Central Avenue/Ruston Way intersection, as this is a prominent location within the city.
- Co-location of transit shelters with other uses is encouraged in order to help justify a larger structure that can serve multiple functions, such as tourist information kiosks, small food service, minor retail, viewing platforms, or weather-protected outdoor dining/seating areas. Doing so will help to provide other uses within the structure that could be activated prior to transit authority needs.

Streetscape Design

Visual Interest and Façade Fenestration – Commercial and Mixed Uses

- Storefronts with traditional designs that enhance pedestrian engagement should be required along all commercial and non-



Storefronts with windows and doors to enhance pedestrian engagement

- residential street frontages. This includes awnings, large ground-level windows, sign bands, transom windows, and doors oriented toward the sidewalk.
- Active frontages with courtyards, outdoor sidewalk seating for cafés, and grand building entries are encouraged.

Visual Interest and Façade Fenestration - Residential Uses

- Residential designs that prioritize street-facing front doors, porches, or stoops located near the sidewalk are encouraged.
- Garage doors and driveways within front yards or facing the street are discouraged in order to maintain a pedestrian-friendly landscape.

Sense of Spatial Enclosure

- Ensure zoning allows building heights that create a well-proportioned streetscape relative to street width. A preferred height-to-street width ratio of 1:1 to 1:3 should guide development. For example, a 20-foot to 60-foot building height would be preferred along a 60 foot wide street, with 40 to 60 feet allowed along busy commercial and mixed use streets like Parkways, and lower heights in the range of 25-35 feet along residential streets like Local Streets and Boulevards.
- Strive for a 1:2 or 1:1 ratio in commercial areas where taller buildings reinforce a stronger sense of place. Redeveloping surface parking lots along Pearl Street into active storefronts will further enhance this spatial enclosure and streetscape vibrancy.

LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS

Level of Service Requirement

The Washington State Department of Commerce requires transportation elements to include Level of Service (LOS) standards. Transportation LOS standards have traditionally been used to gauge performance based on automobile capacity. These standards typically require developments to fund improvements if their automobile traffic impact exceeds predetermined thresholds.

The Complete Streets model offers a modern approach to LOS, emphasizing a holistic, multimodal transportation system. The Washington State Department of Transportation defines Complete Streets as “planning, designing, building, operating, and maintaining the transportation system that enables comfortable and convenient access to destinations for all people, and includes specific requirements for the pedestrian, bicyclist, and transit rider experience.”

Ruston’s incorporation of Complete Streets principles into its LOS standards results in a Multimodal Level of Service (MMLOS) approach. This approach moves beyond traditional measures of automobile capacity, prioritizing infrastructure that serves pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users to create an integrated transportation network. It is particularly valuable for communities like Ruston, where congestion is not expected to be a primary concern, but accessibility, safety, and a well-balanced transportation system are essential for sustainable and inclusive growth. It also aligns seamlessly with the 15-minute city and five-minute walk planning concepts, ensuring that all residents can conveniently access daily needs through safe, multimodal transportation options.

The MMLOS Standards developed with a Complete Streets approach ensures that transportation infrastructure is designed to accommodate all modes of travel, supporting the safe movement of people and goods. Key elements of this approach include:

- **Pedestrian Infrastructure:** Sidewalks, crosswalks, pedestrian safety, and connectivity between key areas of the city.

- **Bicycle Facilities:** Bike lanes, bike racks, and safe routes that encourage cycling as a viable transportation option.
- **Transit Accessibility:** Bus stops, transit schedules, and routes designed to make public transportation efficient and accessible.
- **Vehicle Travel:** Maintaining adequate vehicle access while ensuring that it does not dominate the design of the transportation network.

Why This Approach Matters

The MMLOS – Complete Streets Approach provides several key benefits for Ruston:

- **Encouraging Alternative Transportation:** Ruston can reduce car use and promote walking, biking, and transit, offering more travel options.
- **Improving Safety:** Streets designed for all users reduce conflicts and ensure safety for pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, and drivers.
- **Enhancing Sustainability:** Less cars use lowers emissions and improve air quality, reducing the city's environmental impact.
-  **Supporting Livable Communities:** A balanced transportation network creates connected neighborhoods that attract residents, businesses, and visitors.
- **Achieving Transportation Goals:** By adopting the MMLOS – Complete Streets Approach, Ruston can develop a safe, sustainable, and inclusive transportation system that grows with the city.

Thoroughfare Performance Measures

How do we measure performance when using MMLOS Standards? Since the LOS is determined by the quality of the street rather than by its vehicle movement capacity, it is more appropriate to rate individual elements of the street using a Non-Motorized User Accessibility Index, (see Appendix F – Non-Motorized User Accessibility Index Data Sheet). The Non-Motorized User Accessibility Index used by the City of Ruston scores streets on a scale of 0 to 100 by evaluating the following design elements:

- 1) Non-Peak Hour Free Flow Speed

- 2) Pavement Width (curb face to curb face)
- 3) Presence of On-Street Parking
- 4) Sidewalk and Bicycle Facility Width
- 5) Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity (distance between intersections and bikeway continuity)
- 6) Presence and Quality of Pedestrian and Bicycle Features
- 7) Street Enclosure Ratio
- 8) Land Use Mix
- 9) Street Façade/Frontage Design
- 10) Transit/Bicycle Facilities

Each of the above design elements receives a score of between 0 and 10 points. The points are then added up and the street segment is rated according to the following table:

Accessibility Score	Rating
90– 100 Points	(A)-Highly Accessible for Non-Motorized Users
75 – 89 Points	(B)-Very Accessible for Non-Motorized Users
50 – 74 Points	(C)-Moderately Accessible for Non-Motorized Users
30 – 49 Points	(D)-Basic Accessible for Non-Motorized Users
20 – 29 Points	(E)-Minimal Accessible for Non-Motorized Users
19 Points or Less	(F)-Uncomfortable/Hazardous for Non-Motorized Users

Streets that do not rate as “Very Accessible for Non-Motorized Users” (that is, those that score fewer than 75 points) are considered to have scored below Ruston’s LOS “B” and would require improvement according to the following prioritization of street modifications as appropriate for the specific thoroughfare type:

- 1) Travel Lane Width Reduction
- 2) Pedestrian and Bicycle Buffering
 - a. Construction of on-street reverse angle parking
 - b. Construction of on-street parallel parking
 - c. Construction of dedicated or protected bike lanes
 - d. Installation of shared lane markings (sharrows) where appropriate

- e. Construction of pedestrian-scale street lighting
 - f. Construction of landscape planters or other buffering elements
 - g. Installation of bollards or other physical separation for pedestrian and bicycle safety (with chain at intersections to guide pedestrians to crosswalk)
- 3) Increased Sidewalk and Bicycle Facility Width
- a. Install missing sidewalk and bike lane segments
 - b. Replace broken sidewalk segments
 - c. Widen sidewalks toward property line
 - d. Widen sidewalk toward right-of-way centerline
 - e. Expand bike lanes where feasible
 - f. Widen sidewalk by converting landscape strips to sidewalk/shared-use path and placing tree grates around trees
- 4) Emphasize Pedestrian and Bicycle Crossings
- a. Decrease pedestrian crossing width by installing bulb-outs (curb extensions)
 - b. Provide visual emphasis to unmarked crosswalks and bike crossings
 - c. Install bicycle-specific crossing treatments such as bike boxes and advance stop lines
- 5) Distinct Paving
- a. Replace painted crosswalks with special paving or brick
 - b. Improve bike lane markings and surfacing for visibility
 - c. Use textured or colored pavement to distinguish pedestrian and bicycle areas
 - d. Replace sidewalk sections using traditional scoring pattern
 - e. Replace sidewalk sections with special paving or brick
- 6) Construction of Street Furnishings and Bicycle Amenities
- a. Benches or other public outdoor seating
 - b. Public art and wayfinding signage
 - c. Bicycle racks and repair stations
 - d. Bike parking areas integrated into streetscapes

- 7) Any other method which would enhance the quality of the city's thoroughfare network as described in this chapter, subject to city approval

Level of Service Standards for State and Regional Facilities

RCW 36.70A.070 requires the city to include in its inventory of transportation facilities those facilities owned by the State. As mentioned above, the only state facility is SR 163 (Pearl Street). This Comprehensive Plan assumes LOS standards for Pearl Street concurrent with the City of Tacoma.

FUTURE TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

Traffic Forecast

Over the next 20 years, the City of Ruston anticipates significant growth, driven largely by the ongoing development of Point Ruston. As the primary source of future population and employment growth, the Point Ruston Development is expected to significantly impact the city's traffic patterns, particularly along key corridors such as Pearl Street and North 46th Street. Traffic forecasts based on data from the updated Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) for Point Ruston indicate that both weekday and weekend traffic volumes will increase, with a notable rise in weekend traffic due to the destination attraction of Point Defiance Park. This anticipated growth will place additional demands on the existing transportation infrastructure, particularly during peak periods.

Traffic volumes on Pearl Street, just south of North 51st Street, are expected to grow, with peak weekday and weekend traffic likely to surpass current levels. Additionally, traffic along North 46th Street will likely increase, particularly near Orchard Street, as the alternative route continues to serve both residential and commercial traffic. Future traffic needs will include the optimization of the transportation network to accommodate the influx of vehicles, improved intersection performance, and enhanced multimodal infrastructure, including pedestrian, bicycle, and transit improvements. The Point Ruston Development will be central to shaping these future needs, and traffic management strategies must be aligned with the city's overall

growth strategy, as reflected in the FSEIS traffic projections (see Appendix G – Point Ruston Final Supplemental EIS).

Traffic Impacts to State-Owned Facilities

Ruston contains one state-owned and WSDOT-maintained facility—SR 163 (Pearl Street). SR 163 is a 3.7-mile-long state highway serving the Cities of Tacoma and Ruston in Pierce County before continuing via ferry to the community of Tahlequah on Vashon Island in King County. Beginning at its interchange with SR 16 in Tacoma, SR 163 travels north as Pearl Street through Ruston for 0.51 miles before reaching Point Defiance, where the route continues onto the MV Chetzemoka ferry to Tahlequah.

Pearl Street experiences significant traffic congestion during special events at Point Defiance Park and when the Vashon Island Ferry unloads. During these peak periods, some motorists divert onto Ruston’s residential streets to bypass congestion. Additionally, high traffic volumes occur in spring and summer along Pearl Street and North 51st Street due to increased use of Point Defiance Park and traffic entering the city from Ruston Way.

Although only 15% of Pearl Street lies within Ruston city limits, it plays an important role in the city’s commercial base and pedestrian network. Pearl Street hosts one of the main commercial/mixed use districts within the city and functions more as an urban boulevard than a highway. This transition begins at 46th Street, where Pearl Street narrows from four to two travel lanes with on-street parallel parking. At 38th Street, the speed limit is lowered from 35 mph to 30 mph, providing additional safety and comfort for pedestrians.

Traffic volumes on Pearl Street just south of North 51st Street are significantly lower during weekday and peak hour periods compared to volumes further south near North 37th Street. However, weekend traffic volumes—both daily and peak hour—on this stretch of Pearl Street are almost double those observed on weekdays. This increase in weekend traffic can likely be attributed to the attraction of Point Defiance Park.

North 46th Street offers an alternative route, linking Ruston Way (via Alder Street and North Stevens Street) with Pearl Street. It also serves as a key access point for

residential areas situated between Pearl Street and Ruston Way. Traffic volumes on North 46th Street during weekday hours, including the PM peak period, are slightly higher near Orchard Street compared to those at Pearl Street. In contrast, weekend traffic volumes on this corridor are somewhat lower than weekday volumes.

A more detailed analysis of summer traffic on North Pearl Street, just south of North 51st Street, indicates that July weekend traffic volumes peak around midday. This peak reflects the significant draw of Point Defiance Park as a popular weekend destination, representing the highest traffic volumes of the year. Summer weekday volumes are also slightly elevated compared to average volumes in September.

All signalized intersections and controlled approaches to two-way stop-controlled intersections along these corridors continue to operate at LOS D or better during the PM peak hour.

Future traffic impacts to Pearl Street have been mitigated as recommended in Appendix G – Point Ruston Final Supplemental EIS. With these facility improvements, there will be no adverse impacts to the traffic circulation system.

Future Demand

On a large scale, it is assumed that population growth in Ruston will place further demand on SR 163, SR 16, I-705, I-5, and other state facilities in the region, but no larger a proportionate demand than city residents currently place on the system. The current Washington Transportation Plan, produced by the Washington State Transportation Commission and the Washington State Department of Transportation pursuant to RCW.47.05.010, does not identify any state transportation needs or projects in the Ruston area.

The GMA requires that growth targets be consistent across the land use, housing and traffic elements of the comprehensive plan. Accordingly, this section outlines how Ruston plans to accommodate additional trips generated by projected population growth and addresses potential impacts on the transportation system.

1. Additional population will produce increased traffic volumes but their effect on local streets and regional connectors will be minor.

2. Parkways and boulevards will be improved as shown in the Transportation Element and will adequately absorb additional trips generated by the increase in population.
3. There is room for modest infill in residential areas, including accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and multifamily housing in commercial mixed-use districts, especially live-work units.
4. New residents are likely to be located near or in commercial mixed-use districts, creating an increased need for transportation facilities to accommodate their trips. Facilities include improved pedestrian, bicycle and transit facilities that create a pleasant experience rather than increasing car lane capacity.
5. This approach to traffic forecasting balances the needs of all users—motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders—promoting a multimodal transportation network.
6. Traffic impacts that exceed the city's expectations would be addressed through development impact mitigation using the SEPA process, ensuring that development remains in line with the city's capacity and goals.

Transportation System Expansion Needs

According to the Puget Sound Regional Council, the region's population of more than 4 million generated more than 88 million miles of vehicle travel every day in 2018, or 21.4 miles per person. *Vision 2050* projects the region's population will increase to 5.8 million by 2050, and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is projected to increase to over 105 million daily VMT by 2050. Total daily person trips in the region are projected to increase 47 percent by 2050.

Ruston is targeted to increase its population by about 42% over the next 20 years. Improvements to the city's transportation facilities have already been constructed to accommodate impacts to its transportation facilities as required mitigation for the Point Ruston Development. That means transportation expansion projects will concentrate on non-motorized improvements for the near future.

Mobility for All

The City of Ruston is committed to ensuring equitable access to transportation for all residents, recognizing that not everyone has the same ability to drive or afford a private vehicle. Older adults, individuals with disabilities, youth, and lower-income households may face mobility challenges that limit their access to essential services, employment, and recreational opportunities—particularly if travel is required outside of the city. Since there are limited options for goods and services with Ruston, connections to Tacoma are especially important.

While Ruston has a growing network of sidewalks, bike lanes, and walking paths, gaps in infrastructure and limited public transit options can create barriers for those who depend on alternative modes of transportation. Expanding and improving these connections is a priority to ensure all residents can move safely and independently.

Ruston is dedicated to creating an inclusive transportation system by:

- Ensuring all new sidewalks and pedestrian facilities comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), including appropriate width, curb ramps, and tactile warnings for visually impaired individuals.
- Advocating for enhanced public transit options, recognizing that Ruston's limited retail and service options require strong connections to Tacoma.
- Supporting affordable and shared mobility solutions, such as vanpools, paratransit services, and on-demand transit options.
- Collaborating with regional partners including Pierce Transit, Pierce County, and the Puget Sound Regional Council to expand transit accessibility and explore innovative mobility solutions.

Pierce County's specialized transportation services provide options for residents with disabilities and seniors who require mobility assistance. Pierce Transit provides fixed-route bus service and vanpool options, offering cost-effective alternatives to driving. Additionally, the Ruston Runner shuttle service provides a convenient local transportation option, helping residents and visitors travel within Ruston and connect to nearby destinations. The city will continue working with regional partners to improve transportation options in the Central Sound Area to ensure that everyone—

regardless of age, income, or ability—has reliable and accessible ways to get where they need to go.

FUNDING NEEDS AND SOURCES

The GMA requires the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan to include a multi-year financing plan that aligns with the city's land use plan and identified transportation system needs. This financing plan provides a basis for the city's annual Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP); see **Appendix B** – Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (6-Year TIP). As required by the GMA, the financing program also includes a discussion of how additional funding will be raised and/or how level of service standards will be reassessed and adjusted to ensure the Transportation Element can adequately support the land use plan. Alternatively, the city may reassess its land use plan to maintain consistency with available transportation funding.

The transportation financing program becomes a subset of the city's Capital Facilities Plan Element, which must include at least a six-year capital facilities plan identifying funding sources for planned improvements.

The city's long-range transportation plan consists of defined projects for the Six-Year TIP and a long term maintenance plan covering the remaining 14 years of the planning period. The city evaluated existing and forecast traffic volumes, traffic operations, public safety, and street conditions to create a recommended list of transportation projects. The improvements address safety and roadway preservation, upgrades to existing roads, and multimodal enhancements, including new non-motorized infrastructure, to support forecasted economic growth and development. Funding for these projects comes from a combination of local, regional, and state sources, including grants, in addition to funds expected to be raised through the implementation of traffic impact fees and parking/pedestrian improvement fund fees. The city seeks to leverage available grant opportunities to maximize local investments.

Specific Actions for Facilities below MMLOS Standards

Streets that do not meet the city's MMLOS standards are prioritized and scheduled for remedying along with other street projects in the Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan and Capital Facilities Plan.

Transit level of service standards are outside the city's ability to unilaterally remedy. The city is committed to discussions with Pierce County and Pierce Transit to ensure reasonable levels of service for buses and future light rail.

FUTURE VISION

Ruston's transportation network is safe, connected, and multimodal, supporting a walkable community while preserving the city's small-town character. Pedestrians and bicyclists enjoy seamless connections throughout the city, along the shores of Commencement Bay, and to parks, including nearby Point Defiance. Thoughtful planning has created balanced streets that accommodate all travel modes, enhance mobility, and prioritize pedestrian-friendly thoroughfares. Pearl Street, 51st Street, and Ruston Way serve as gateways to the city, supporting a mix of residential and commercial uses. Mass transit provides regional connections, supporting sustainable growth and transit-oriented development.

GOALS AND POLICIES

Transportation policies guide the development and maintenance of a multimodal network that aligns with Ruston’s land use vision. These goals and policies ensure investments in streets, sidewalks, and transit infrastructure support mobility, safety, and accessibility while maintaining the community’s unique character.

Transportation Goal 1: To incorporate principles of Traditional Neighborhood Design into Ruston’s transportation plans to maintain Ruston’s small-town character, improve multimodal connections, increase walkability within the city and to nearby destinations, and improve pedestrian experience and quality of life.

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| TR Policy 1.1 | Prioritize policies and regulations that support Traditional Neighborhood Design, ensuring they take precedence over existing policies and regulations if a conflict exists. |
| TR Policy 1.2 | Prohibit vehicular access from street frontages where alley or side street access is available, ensuring new development is accessed via alleys or rear lanes only. |
| TR Policy 1.3 | Prohibit new curb cuts and the expansion of existing curb cuts for driveways on lots with alley access, ensuring vehicle access is maintained from the alley. |
| TR Policy 1.4 | Prioritize funding for improvements in Neighborhood Centers, including Prominent Parcels, to support Ruston’s sustainability and vitality. |

- TR Policy 1.5 Require new development and redevelopment to align with the existing street grid pattern, maintaining a walkable and enjoyable small-town environment while supporting safe and efficient vehicle circulation. Where alignment is not physically possible, require dedication of right-of-way or easements. All projects should incorporate alleys where feasible.
- TR Policy 1.6 Expand mobility choices and promote healthy lifestyles by investing in projects and programs that encourage a walkable community.
- TR Policy 1.7 Develop Pearl Street, 51st Street, and Ruston Way as parkways or “gateways” to Ruston, and provide multimodal thoroughfares connecting the parkways to commercial areas.

Transportation Goal 2: To maintain an efficient, safe, and well-designed street system that promotes desired development patterns.

- TR Policy 2.1 Adopt street performance measures that incorporate assessment of enjoyable walkability, adequacy of bicycle facilities such as bike lanes and parking, and other factors to evaluate the overall quality of service for Ruston’s streets.
- TR Policy 2.2 Utilize Thoroughfare Typologies as a set of best practices to support and guide the coordinated enhancement of Ruston’s streets, including key pedestrian, bicycle, and on-street parking improvements by both the City of Ruston and private development.

TR Policy 2.3 Allow parking requirements to be waived when developers contribute in-lieu fees or transportation impact fees to fund city transportation facilities and improvements. Direct such investments toward improvements including parking development in targeted underutilized areas, as identified in the city's parking inventory analysis.

Transportation Goal 3: To coordinate with the City of Tacoma and the Washington State Department of Transportation to ensure that adequate transportation facilities in the region are available concurrent with new development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use.

TR Policy 3.1 **Secure adequate thoroughfare width to accommodate future pedestrian facilities and roadways by using the development approval process to acquire or require right-of-way dedication, sidewalk/utility easements and dooryards (e.g., through zoning, subdivision, and building permits).**

TR Policy 3.2 Pursue funding for multimodal right-of-way improvements through a variety of sources including grants and government matching programs.

TR Policy 3.3 Ensure that transportation modes, both non-motorized and motorized, are integrated as a unified system. Design all streets as "complete streets," where non-motorized improvements are considered essential, not amenities. Incorporate funding for multimodal improvements into mainstream transportation programs.

TR Policy 3.4	Enhance and implement Ruston's Emergency Preparedness Plan to protect the transportation system against disaster and develop prevention and recovery strategies. Coordinate planning efforts with Pierce County and the City of Tacoma.
TR Policy 3.5	Coordinate with local and regional transit authorities at least annually to align future planning efforts with Ruston's evolving transportation needs, including preparing for emerging transportation technologies and changing mobility patterns.
TR Policy 3.6	Apply sustainable and environmentally responsible design principles in road construction.

Transportation Goal 4: To recognize the role waterborne commerce has played in the city's past and will continue to play in its future due to Ruston's unique proximity to deep, navigable water.

TR Policy 4.1	Support the development of a passenger dock or terminal along Ruston's shoreline to accommodate cruise ships and other waterborne transportation, enhancing the city's role as a waterfront destination.
TR Policy 4.2	Ensure that any new passenger dock or terminal is well-integrated with Ruston's pedestrian and bicycle network, providing safe, convenient, and accessible connections to the city's existing trails, sidewalks, and transit options.
TR Policy 4.3	Collaborate with regional and private partners to secure funding and investment opportunities for waterborne transportation infrastructure that enhances economic development and tourism.

Transportation Goal 5: To promote increased public transit services, including light rail, to serve residents of Ruston as warranted by population and demand.

- TR Policy 5.1 Work with Pierce County Transit to improve bus service in Ruston and from Ruston to the Tacoma Dome transit station. Also work with Sound Transit to provide a light rail station in Ruston.
- TR Policy 5.2 Coordinate with Metro Parks Tacoma to develop optimum multimodal thoroughfares to the City of Ruston's commercial amenities, open spaces, and neighborhoods.
- TR Policy 5.3 Engage Ruston's elected officials and staff in advocating for the extension of light rail service to Ruston and the Destination Point Defiance area. Support inclusion of this connection in Sound Transit's Long Range Plan.

Transportation Goal 6: To maintain adequate traffic flow while recognizing that eliminating all peak-hour vehicular congestion may not be economically feasible. Pedestrian and bicycle facilities should not be neglected in order to maintain or facilitate vehicle-oriented development.

- TR Policy 6.1 Work with the City of Tacoma, Metro Parks Tacoma, and the Washington State Department of Transportation to address traffic issues associated with Point Defiance Park and the Vashon Island Ferry Terminal.

TR Policy 6.2 Pursue a partnership with Metro Tacoma Parks, the City of Tacoma, Pierce Transit, and Sound Transit to establish a shuttle bus service between the Tacoma Dome transit station and Destination Point Defiance.

TR Policy 6.3 Provide multimodal thoroughfares between Destination Point Defiance (where the City of Ruston, City of Tacoma, and Point Defiance Park converge) and the Tacoma Dome transit station. Prioritize improvements that support tourism and accessibility.

Transportation Goal 7: To encourage the development of safe sidewalks, bikeways, and paths as part of a non-motorized circulation system that enhances transportation, public enjoyment of natural areas, and access to scenic views.

TR Policy 7.1 Develop and maintain a comprehensive non-motorized circulation system, including sidewalks, bikeways and paths that supports transportation, enhances public enjoyment of natural areas, and maximizes access to scenic views.

TR Policy 7.2 Ensure the development of accessible, safe, and efficient multimodal transportation thoroughfares that enhance the movement of people, goods, and services.

TR Policy 7.3 Incorporate Complete Streets principles in the design, construction, and redevelopment of all transportation corridors to ensure streets are safe, accessible, and inclusive for all users, regardless of mode of travel, age, or ability.

- TR Policy 7.4 Integrate Multimodal Level of Service (MMLOS) standards into the planning and evaluation of transportation projects to ensure that all street users, including pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, and motorists, experience high-quality, equitable access to transportation options.
- TR Policy 7.5 Encourage the reconfiguration of parallel parking and bike lanes by placing bike lanes between parked vehicles and the sidewalk where feasible. This approach facilitates the creation of protected bike lanes, improving cyclist safety while reducing the need for additional space.
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- TR Policy 7.6** Require the installation of raised crosswalks at all new intersections and mid-block pedestrian crossings within new developments to enhance pedestrian safety, calm traffic, and support walkability. Raised crosswalks should be designed to align with Ruston’s Traditional Neighborhood Design principles and Complete Streets standards.
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POLICY CONNECTIONS

Ruston’s transportation network must be planned to accommodate future growth while ensuring safety, accessibility, and mobility for all users. The **Land Use Element** and **Housing Element** include policies that guide development patterns, shaping transportation demand and infrastructure needs.

The **Capital Facilities Element** outlines funding strategies and planning frameworks for infrastructure improvements, including transportation facilities that fall under the Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The **Utilities Element** includes policies addressing coordination between transportation projects and utility infrastructure to ensure efficient service delivery.

The **Community Character Element** provides guidance on maintaining Ruston’s unique identity through streetscape design, pedestrian-friendly environments, and context-sensitive transportation improvements.

The **Shoreline Element** includes policies for transportation infrastructure within the shoreline jurisdiction, ensuring compatibility with environmental and recreational priorities.

DRAFT

Chapter 7 Utilities



INTRODUCTION

The Utilities Element addresses the general location, proposed location, and capacity of all existing and proposed utilities in Ruston. For purposes of this element, utilities include electricity, sanitary sewer, stormwater, natural gas, water, solid waste, and telecommunications. Many public and private agencies are involved in regulating, coordinating, producing, delivering, and supplying utility services.

This element aims to ensure the provision of sufficient and dependable utilities for future growth at a reasonable cost while also safeguarding public health, safety, and sustainability and preserving the distinctive character of the community.

EXISTING UTILITIES AND CONDITIONS

Currently, there is sufficient capacity for all utilities to meet the needs of existing and anticipated new developments within Ruston. The table below gives an overview of Ruston's utilities and providers.

Utility	Provider
Electricity	City of Ruston
Sanitary Sewer	City of Ruston
Stormwater	City of Ruston
Natural Gas	Puget Sound Energy
Water	Tacoma Public Utilities – Water Division
Solid Waste	Murrey's Disposal
Telecommunications	Lumen Technologies and Comcast

Electricity

The City of Ruston owns its own electrical system that purchases and distributes power from Tacoma Public Utilities (TPU). The City of Ruston does not presently own

or operate any substations. Ruston's municipally owned electrical utility bills its customers for the power it purchases and distributes from TPU. Ruston's primary electrical distribution system consists of one distribution feeder serving the area entirely within the city's boundaries. The system is mostly overhead with primary lines extending from the substation to Winnifred Street along 50th Street. The system serves approximately 550 customers in a 0.8 square mile service territory. The existing electrical system appears to be adequately maintained, and construction practices generally conform to industry standards. Overall, there is capacity to meet existing demand within incorporated city limits.

Sanitary Sewer

The City of Ruston owns and maintains its own wastewater collection system which underwent a series of major upgrades and repairs over the past several years. Ruston has an inter-local agreement with the City of Tacoma by which Tacoma receives and treats Ruston's wastewater. The agreement has a term of 35-years and was adopted in January of 1979. Extension of the agreement is currently being reviewed. Sewage from Ruston is collected in an interceptor that runs down Ruston Way to Tacoma's north end Wastewater Treatment Plant. The plant uses physical and chemical processes for secondary treatment and discharges treated water into Commencement Bay through a deep-water outflow. A major plant upgrade was completed in 1997. Tacoma has an ongoing inflow and infiltration program which began in 1995.

Sanitary sewer will serve all new development within city limits. Existing residents not served by sewer should be encouraged to connect to the sewer system. Any new development in Ruston should pay its "fair share" of the cost of improving facilities and extending lines to access the system. Ruston will continue to coordinate with the Tacoma Public Works Department to ensure that the inter-tie between the two municipalities is adequate to serve any new increased flow. Ruston adopts Level of Service Standards for sanitary sewer as expressed in the Tacoma Utilities Plan and the inter-local agreement with Tacoma for sanitary sewer service.

Stormwater

Ruston's stormwater system consists of catch basins and storm sewer pipes and occasional open ditches and culverts under driveways and streets that flow into natural drainage ways. All stormwater from Ruston is discharged into Commencement Bay through three outfalls along the shoreline. All jurisdictions tributary to Puget Sound are required by the Department of Ecology (DOE) to treat stormwater runoff in compliance with the DOE's Puget Sound Water Quality Control Manual.

New development in Ruston should be required to provide adequate stormwater facilities to minimize its impact on stormwater flows and erosion. Stormwater discharge should be maintained to meet DOE and Department of Fisheries standards as may be required by law. Ruston should also continue to maintain a reserve fund to pay for drainage improvements.

Natural Gas

Three providers supply most of the region's natural gas: Puget Sound Energy, Cascade Natural Gas, and Williams. Northwest Pipeline delivers wholesale gas to providers, which distribute the product to retail consumers in the region. There is a single main bidirectional pipeline serving the Puget Sound region with lateral feeders. Ruston is presently served by Puget Sound Energy. A high-pressure line enters Ruston from Baltimore Street and smaller distribution lines feed city customers. Gas service is generally extended to new development upon evaluations of requests based on an economic feasibility study.

Water

Ruston's water system is owned by the City of Tacoma and their Department of Public Works operates and maintains the system. Tacoma and Ruston have a 50-year franchise agreement (adopted November 1977) under which Tacoma provides Ruston's domestic and firefighting water supply. Evaluation of the franchise

agreement should be considered prior to November 2027, the end of the initial 50-year agreement.

The Green River supplies the water that Tacoma provides for Ruston during most months of the year. However, during some summer months or dry periods approximately 50% of the water is drawn from the Green River and 50% is drawn from wells located along South Tacoma Way. The system does not have a water treatment plant. Water is chlorinated either at the source or open reservoirs. The Portland Avenue reservoir has a capacity of 50 million gallons and the McMillian Reservoir has a capacity of 210 million gallons. In Ruston 12-inch main trunk lines run along Pearl Street, North 51st Street and Orchard Street. There is also one 12-inch line that runs along Ruston Way to commercial/mixed use areas.

The city is required to make future water connections within its borders and the connection fee is financed by the applicant for new development at the applicable rate established by city ordinance. Ruston will continue to coordinate with the City of Tacoma to provide reliable and healthy water service for city residents and businesses. Through its inter-local agreement, Ruston and Tacoma will time new development with provision of water service. New development will be allowed when water connections can be provided, and any new development will be expected to pay its “fair share” of the cost of extending water service facilities and increasing water service capacity. Ruston adopts City of Tacoma Level of Service Standards for its water system since water service is provided by Tacoma. New development connections will be charged at the applicable rate established under City of Tacoma Ordinance.

Solid Waste

The City of Ruston contracts with Murrey’s Disposal for the provision of solid waste disposal services.

Telecommunications

The City of Ruston is served by both Lumen Technologies and Comcast for telecommunication services, including cable television, internet and telephone. All of the telecommunication facilities, including aerial and underground, are co-located upon City of Ruston-owned utility poles or within Ruston's right of way. No private utility poles exist within Ruston's right of way.

FUTURE VISION

Planning and placement of utilities in Ruston supports the community's future vision for growth. Utility planning has contributed to Ruston residents' and businesses' quality of life by ensuring efficient utility delivery. Communications facilities are keeping up with changes in technology. Conservation and protection of existing resources have ensured a continued supply of clean water and energy.

GOALS AND POLICIES

Utilities Goal 1: Ruston's utilities are located, monitored, coordinated, and maintained in such a way as to provide safe, sufficient, reliable, efficient, and cost-effective services to all residents and businesses, remaining consistent with regulatory requirements and Ruston's Comprehensive Plan, and meeting demands of growth and economic development.

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| UT Policy 1.1 | Monitor all public or private utility systems and services; Maintain Ruston-owned systems and services. |
| UT Policy 1.2 | Develop and maintain updated system-wide inventories and plans for the provision of all public utility services. |

- UT Policy 1.3 Develop a strategy for maintaining and rehabilitating Ruston's utility infrastructure.
- UT Policy 1.4 Periodically reassess and modify all agreements, ordinances, and related documents to ensure Ruston's utility services remain consistent with the community's vision and needs. Reassess and consider new services or providers that enable residents, businesses, and live/work uses to compete in the global marketplace.
- UT Policy 1.5 Utility services should be provided concurrently with or in advance of demand.
- UT Policy 1.6 Ensure utility services are appropriate for the size and composition of the development and population they serve.
- UT Policy 1.7 Design new development to allow for efficient and economical provision of utility services and require new development to pay its "fair share" of the cost of providing services.
- UT Policy 1.8 Require the underground installation of all utilities, including electrical and telecommunication, associated with new construction or redevelopment.
- UT Policy 1.9 System design practices and construction schedules should minimize disruptions and ensure the availability of land for utility lines and facilities.
- UT Policy 1.10 Foster collaboration between Ruston and its utility providers for streamlined planning, installation, and long-term maintenance. Coordination on projects such as utility installation, street maintenance, and traffic calming promotes cost-effective construction, minimizes road closures, and delays, and reduces the likelihood of repeated construction activities on the same street.

- UT Policy 1.11 Require the co-location of public and private utilities in shared trenches. Require the placement of Ruston-owned conduit for future undergrounding of utilities whenever feasible (at the discretion of the city engineer) during trenching or road construction activities.
- UT Policy 1.12 Natural gas services should be extended to all existing and new developments instead of using propane tanks.
- UT Policy 1.13 Utility services and infrastructure shall not be designed and situated in locations that negatively impact community character.
- UT Policy 1.14 Reassess the Land Use Element if Ruston cannot provide funding to maintain adopted levels of service for public utilities that it manages.
- UT Policy 1.15 Promote reliable and affordable access to essential utility services by identifying and addressing service deficiencies and coordinating with providers to serve all areas of the community.

Utilities Goal 2: Ruston develops and manages utility infrastructure and services in an environmentally sensitive manner to protect and enhance the natural environment and promote sustainability.

- UT Policy 2.1 Design Ruston with a strong emphasis on biking and walking to foster energy efficiency, sustainability, reduced energy consumption, lower emissions, promotion of healthy lifestyles, diminished noise levels, and conservation of resources.
- UT Policy 2.2 Support energy efficiency by encouraging the use of energy-efficient building designs and land uses.

- UT Policy 2.3 Ensure existing and new developments minimize total runoff quantity, prevent increased peak stormwater runoff, and avoid alterations to natural drainage systems to prevent flooding and water quality degradation.
- UT Policy 2.4 Discourage stormwater infiltration in areas that are contaminated or may impact nearby contamination.
- UT Policy 2.5 Cooperate and coordinate with local and regional agencies on developing the Ruston Stormwater Plan to protect public and private properties from flooding and polluting Puget Sound.
- UT Policy 2.6 Support the conversion to cost-effective and environmentally sensitive alternative technologies and energy sources.
- UT Policy 2.7 Promote improved conservation, more efficient water use, and increased use of reclaimed water, as is practical, given ASARCO soil contamination issues. Support and participate in the City of Tacoma's water conservation activities.
- UT Policy 2.8 Support recycling of municipal and household waste as part of Ruston's commitment to sustainability.

Utilities Goal 3: Ruston utilizes sound fiscal management of utility infrastructure and services to cultivate a transparent and collaborative relationship between the government, residents, and businesses, all while ensuring cost-effective rates.

UT Policy 3.1	Develop a financial strategy for financing Ruston's utility infrastructure, including funding sources and reserve funds to pay for replacement and rehabilitation.
UT Policy 3.2	Pursue grant funding whenever feasible to assist with funding needed for utility system extensions, undergrounding, rehabilitation, and upgrades.

UT Policy 3.3	Encourage and pursue, whenever feasible, opportunities to share facilities and costs with different public or private agencies/entities.
UT Policy 3.4	Anticipate and control demand for services to ensure that Ruston can maintain an appropriate level of service within its financial resources while serving new growth.
UT Policy 3.5	Recognize that the responsibility for financing utility construction generally rests with developers, users, and others directly benefiting from the improvement.
UT Policy 3.6	Continue to participate in conservation programs and seek funding to support them.

POLICY CONNECTIONS

Utilities must be planned to accommodate future growth with adequate financing available. **The Land Use Element** and **Housing Element** each include policies and information about projected growth and housing.

The **Capital Facilities and Utilities Element** each includes policies demonstrating how public services and utility infrastructure will serve existing and future land uses.

Utilities must be coordinated with transportation infrastructure to prevent conflicts within the right of way. The **Transportation Element** provides information for Ruston's transportation system including streets, bike facilities, sidewalks, on-street public parking and public transit facilities.

Utilities must not negatively impact community character. The **Community Character Element** includes policies to preserve community character.

The **Economic Vitality Element** includes guidance on utility infrastructure needed to support economic development.

The **Shoreline Element** includes guidance on the placement of utility infrastructure within the shoreline jurisdiction.

CITY OF RUSTON WASHINGTON

Chapter 8

Capital Facilities



INTRODUCTION

The Capital Facilities Element is a key part of Ruston's Comprehensive Plan. It evaluates the feasibility of other elements and includes all essential facilities provided by public entities. These facilities support both the current community and its anticipated growth over the next two decades, such as sidewalks, streets, bridges, schools, parks, and emergency services.

Under the state's Growth Management Act (GMA), municipalities must meet specific requirements for capital facility planning. This ensures that public facilities and services facilitate development without compromising current service levels. The Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) must include an inventory of existing publicly owned facilities, a forecast of future needs for new or expanded facilities, and at least a six-year financial plan detailing how these future facilities will be funded. This mandate aims to guide comprehensive plan implementation, establish a proactive framework for decision-makers, and ensure transparency in purchasing decisions. It helps municipalities avoid significant expenditure surprises, enhancing the city's quality of life and aligning with community values.

CAPITAL FACILITIES INVENTORY AND FORECAST

Ruston is committed to delivering efficient and satisfactory public facilities to its residents and businesses. New developments must contribute their "fair share" towards the cost of expanding capital facilities, and approval for new development is contingent upon ensuring adequate provision. This section focuses on the existing capital facilities managed by the City of Ruston.

Many of Ruston's capital facilities operate under dedicated functional plans, and the city aims to establish additional functional plans in the future, as noted in the goals and policies of this chapter. Each plan outlines facility needs based on Level of Service (LOS) standards, operational criteria, or performance standards. These plans also include detailed inventories of current facilities, infrastructure, and proposed improvements. Refer to the table below for a list of facility types and references to associated functional plans, where applicable.

The Ruston Capital Improvement Program (CIP) details planned capital facility improvements and associated costs for the upcoming six years. The program is included in the appendix and undergoes periodic updates.

Ruston Capital Facilities and Functional Plans

Facility	Provider	Functional Plan
General City Services	City of Ruston	N/A
Police	City of Ruston	N/A
Fire & Medical Aid	City of Ruston	N/A
Complete Streets	City of Ruston	Transportation Element & Transportation Improvement Program
On-Street Parking	City of Ruston	On-Street Parking Inventory & Analysis <i>Not Completed – See Transportation Element</i>
Sidewalks	City of Ruston	Sidewalk Inventory <i>Not Completed - See Transportation Element</i>
Parks, Recreation & Open Space	City of Ruston	Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan <i>Not Completed - See Capital Facilities Goals/Policies</i>
Power	City of Ruston	City of Tacoma Integrated Resource Plan
Sanitary Sewer	City of Tacoma	Wastewater Comprehensive Plan
Stormwater	City of Ruston	Stormwater Management Plan <i>Not Completed - See Utilities Element Goals/Policies</i>

Water	City of Tacoma	Water System Plan
Solid Waste, Yard Waste & Recycling	Murrey's Disposal	Pierce County Solid & Hazardous Waste Management Plan
Schools	Tacoma Public Schools	Strategic Plan

Civic Life

Thriving civic spaces strengthen community bonds, while their absence can lead to disconnection. Ruston values its unique public areas, which serve as hubs for community interaction and unity. Civic buildings, sidewalks, and parks are vital features of Ruston, enhancing its beauty and encouraging active use. They serve as platforms for public events, social gatherings, and cultural exchanges, enriching the city's vibrancy. In addition, strategically located civic spaces can attract anchor businesses, increasing Ruston's economic stability.

Ruston sustains its civic life through a range of amenities. These include Winnifred Street Park, where events like the annual Easter egg hunt are held; the Ruston School building, which provides city services, civic engagement, and special gatherings; Rust Park, where recreational activities are held, and a well-maintained grid of sidewalks spanning the entire city. These sidewalks connect to commercial districts, offering diverse options for shopping and dining. Additionally, the scenic Ruston Waterwalk along Commencement Bay provides connections to Dune Peninsula, Point Defiance Park, and the Ruston Way waterfront.

Maintaining parks, open spaces, and recreation facilities are essential for Ruston's future. They enrich the community's quality of life, offer recreational opportunities, and support healthy living. Preserving scenic views and shoreline access of natural landmarks such as Commencement Bay, Mount Rainier, and the Olympic Mountain Range becomes increasingly crucial as the Puget Sound region continues to grow.

Ruston School Building & General City Services

The brick Ruston School building was erected shortly after the original structure was lost in a 1917 fire and served as a school until the mid-1980s. Subsequently, ownership of the Ruston School was transferred to the Tacoma School District before being returned to the City of Ruston following a campaign led by Councilwoman Mary Joyce. The former gymnasium, now renovated into the Ruston Community Center, was dedicated to Joyce for her leadership in the effort. The “new” Ruston School building occupies the same site as the very first schoolhouse that hosted the inaugural town council meeting in 1906. Throughout Ruston’s history and into the present day, this location has remained a focal point of community activity.

Today, the Ruston School building houses Ruston’s administrative offices, the Police department, and the Mary Joyce Community Center, which serves as a venue for City Council and Planning Commission meetings, and special events. Additionally, the school building contains office spaces leased to local businesses. Full-time and part-time staff serve the functions of police, city clerk, utility billing, planning, building, and public works. Ruston utilizes outside consultants for legal, fire marshal, building inspection, engineering, and planning services for fluctuating staffing needs. In addition, Ruston has mutual-aid agreements in place for police and fire and interlocal agreements for court and jail services. Most city maintenance services are performed by full-time employees, and their equipment is stored at multiple city properties. Along with general administrative equipment, Ruston owns police, fire, and public works equipment.

Despite numerous renovations and improvements, the Ruston School building currently has outstanding issues, such as the need for a new roof, and energy efficiency and ADA accessibility improvements. A public works shop, public safety building, and park improvements are all potential capital facility projects to be considered. As Ruston undergoes growth, planning for future staffing, equipment, and community needs should be evaluated. Consolidating municipal services into one or two locations could yield operational efficiencies. Further analysis is advised, including exploring opportunities for new development on existing city-owned land or acquiring additional properties.

Police, Fire, and Medical Aid

The Ruston Police Department delivers comprehensive law enforcement services led by a police chief and supported by full-time, part-time, and reserve officers. Situated within the Ruston School building at 52nd and Shirley Street, the department's operational assets include office space and equipment, vehicles, and specialized police equipment.

Ruston's fire and medical aid services operate from the old City Hall on Winnifred Street. The team includes a full-time fire chief and part-time volunteers. The department's operational assets include office space, equipment, and specialized firefighting and emergency vehicles.

Parks, Recreation & Open Space

Ruston residents and visitors value the city's walkability and its proximity to parks, sidewalks, trails, and natural scenery. Nestled in one of Washington State's most stunning regions, Ruston is adjacent to Point Defiance Park, Dune Peninsula Park, and the Vashon Ferry terminal. Quasi-public open spaces required by recent developments include the Ruston Waterwalk and the undeveloped Promontory Hill Park. Ruston also maintains its own parks and open spaces, including Rust Park, Winnifred Street Park, the undeveloped Bennett Street Community Garden, and other city properties, all of which hold untapped potential. As urban development continues, strategic planning for park and recreation facilities, along with open spaces, becomes essential for the community's overall well-being. Ruston's forthcoming Park, Recreation, and Open Space Plan (PROS) will strengthen and facilitate the community's vision for these critical resources.

Complete Streets

Ruston's transportation planning embraces the modern complete streets model, which prioritizes the needs of all road users: pedestrians, cyclists, public transit users, and motorists. This approach seeks to create streets that are safe, accessible, and convenient for everyone. Implementing complete streets can significantly enhance

the quality of life for citizens in various ways, including safety, accessibility, health, environmental sustainability, social equity, and economic development.

Ruston's rights-of-way are essential public assets that play a crucial role in meeting the needs of all road users. Facility planning and management encompass a range of elements, including sidewalks, bike facilities, crosswalks, traffic calming measures, public transit facilities, street furnishings, lighting, wayfinding signage, bridges, and driving lanes. These components work together to create safe, accessible, and efficient transportation networks that benefit the entire community. For more detailed information, refer to the Transportation Element.

Electricity, Sanitary Sewer, Stormwater, Solid Waste & Recycling

The Utilities Element of this document contains comprehensive information about various essential utilities such as electricity, sanitary sewer, stormwater, solid waste, yard waste, and recycling. These utilities are also an integral part of the Capital Facilities Plan (CFP). This section includes general guidelines for utilities in terms of goals, policies, and the six-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

Public Education

There are no schools in the City of Ruston. The Tacoma School District serves Ruston residents. Coordination and involvement with the Tacoma School District are important for community residents. For more information regarding local school facility planning, refer to the Tacoma School District website.

Figure 8.1 Existing Public Facilities Map



CRITERIA AND CONSIDERATIONS

Developing a 6-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is a complex process that requires careful planning and adjustments due to the high costs and long-lasting nature of the facilities. It's important to set clear criteria and considerations to guide decisions on investments for the greatest public benefit. For the purpose of this plan, capital facilities are major, non-reoccurring expenditures that meet all of the following criteria:

- It is an expenditure that can be classified as a fixed asset.
- It has a cost of \$50,000 or more.
- It has a useful life of 10 years or more (except for certain equipment which may have a short life span).

The following should also be considered when determining Ruston's 6-year Capital Improvement Program:

Public Safety: Projects must address significant safety risks, with a focus on benefiting community safety or the environment. Proposals from departments responsible for public safety (e.g., Fire, Police) do not automatically meet this criterion. Other departments may also propose projects addressing safety concerns. For instance, while most street projects contribute to public safety, intersections with documented safety issues should receive priority treatment.

Public Health: Projects must prioritize environmental and community health. This criterion applies when public health is imperative, not a matter of choice. For example, while all water or sewer projects impact public health, only those addressing ongoing health hazards are mandatory.

Comprehensive Plan Consistency: Projects must align with the Comprehensive Plan to support its implementation over twenty years. City departments are obligated to propose projects that actively implement the plan's goals and policies.

Legal Requirements: Projects may be mandated by state or federal laws, court orders, or judgments concerning annexation, property rights, or environmental protection. These legal requirements influence project prioritization.

Related Projects: Projects in one category may be vital to the success of projects in other categories. Savings from related projects proposed by different departments or entities should be pursued.

Impact on Future Operating Budgets: The potential cost of a proposed project to the city's future budgets should be carefully weighed before funding. However, in some cases, a project may generate sufficient revenue to cover its own costs.

Other: Departments may include additional priority factors for evaluation, such as public support, service level, cost savings, or economic development impact.

FUNDING

Impact and Connection Fees: State law allows cities to collect fees from owners or developers as development occurs to fund park acquisition, park development, utility, and transportation capital projects. The fee amount is determined by estimating the appropriate private sector cost of the capital facilities that are required to meet expected demand and achieve the established service level standard. The appropriate private sector cost is allocated to new development based on its estimated impact on demand.

Systems Development Charges (SDCS): Like impact fees, SDCs are collected from existing system users to fund improvements to water and sewer utilities. These funds may be expended on projects that expand utility system capacity and can either pay for debt service on bonds or for direct project expenditures.

Real Estate Excise Tax (REET): State statute authorizes the cities to impose two taxes of one-quarter percent on the sale of real estate within the city limits. The proceeds of the tax must be used for capital purposes as allowed by State law and as directed by the City Council.

Federal, State, Local, and Private Grants: Ruston has been active in applying for grants from various state agencies to fund capital facilities and strives to stay up to date on federal, local, and private grants available. These grants are typically available for a specific purpose and often require the commitment of local funding as a match to the grant.

General Obligation Bonds: Funding for capital facilities projects may be provided by general obligation bonds issued for specific purposes. The source for repayment of the bonds can be from general fund revenue or from other revenue sources the City Council dedicates for that purpose. The maximum amount of non-voted debt the city can issue is limited by state law.

Water and Sewer Utility Revenue Bonds: Revenue bonds issued by the city's water and sewer utilities have been used to fund specific capital projects for the utilities. The bonds are repaid from user fees charged to the water and sewer utilities customers. Utility revenue bonds are repaid exclusively from utility revenues.

Voter-Approved Bonds: Voters can approve a property tax levy to pay for bonds issued to fund capital projects.

Operating Funds: Ruston may allocate operating or general funds for capital purposes. Operating funds have been used in the past to fund capital facility improvements for transportation and parks and recreation. They can be used to pay for projects directly or to pay principal and interest on bonds issued to fund capital projects.

FUTURE VISION

Ruston has planned well for future infrastructure and service needs. The city's population has grown and continues to be a safe, enjoyable, walkable, and healthy community that provides quality public facilities and services. Civic buildings, gathering places, parks, and open spaces are distinct in architecture and character, contributing to the community's vision.

GOALS AND POLICIES

Capital facilities policies ensure that Ruston plans for maintenance and infrastructure replacement to maintain levels of service. These policies also tie capital facilities planning to land use, making sure that assumptions about future growth are consistent.

Capital Facilities Goal 1: Ruston’s capital facilities are located, monitored, coordinated, and maintained in such a way as to provide safe, sufficient, reliable, efficient, and cost-effective public facilities to all residents and businesses, remaining consistent with regulatory requirements and Ruston’s Comprehensive Plan, and meeting demands of growth and economic development.

- CF Policy 1.1 Establish clear criteria for identifying and prioritizing capital facility needs, with a focus on improving access and services for historically underserved communities to support a higher quality of life for all residents.
- CF Policy 1.2 Develop and maintain updated system-wide capital facility inventories and functional plans for the provision of public facilities.
- CF Policy 1.3 Establish level of service (LOS) standards for city-owned public facilities and work with non-city service providers to maintain a LOS consistent with city standards and vision. Periodically reassess and modify all agreements, ordinances, and related documents to ensure Ruston’s public facilities remain consistent with the communities’ vision and needs.

- CF Policy 1.4 Capital facilities should be provided concurrently with or in advance of demand, and new development should be required to pay its “fair share” of the cost of providing facilities.
- CF Policy 1.5 Ensure capital facilities are appropriate for the size and composition of the development and population they serve.
- CF Policy 1.6 Consider the best use and location of civic-owned land for public facilities and services.
- CF Policy 1.7 Emergency service facilities should be strategically positioned to optimize accessibility and minimize response times.
- CF Policy 1.8 Manage parking as a valuable resource and seek opportunities to reconfigure existing parking and underutilized public rights-of-way to create additional on-street parking.
- CF Policy 1.9 Capital Facility infrastructure shall not be designed and situated in locations that negatively impact community character.
- CF Policy 1.10 Coordinate with other public agencies to site essential public facilities, ensuring these services are away from the 500-year floodplain.
- CF Policy 1.11 Seek opportunities for collaborative efforts with other entities to achieve public facility and service efficiencies.
- CF Policy 1.12 Reassess the Land Use Element if Ruston cannot provide funding to maintain adopted levels of service for public facilities that it owns.
- CF Policy 1.13 Coordinate with regional partners to support the siting of civic and public facilities—both within and surrounding Ruston—in locations that are accessible by transit or active transportation that benefit residents’ health, mobility, and quality of life.

Capital Facilities Goal 2: Ruston develops and manages capital facilities in an environmentally sensitive manner to protect and enhance the natural environment and promote sustainability.

- CF Policy 2.1 Design Ruston with a strong emphasis on biking and walking to foster energy efficiency, sustainability, reduced energy consumption, lower emissions, promotion of healthy lifestyles, diminished noise levels, and conservation of resources.
- CF Policy 2.2 Support energy efficiency by encouraging the use of energy-efficient building designs and land uses.
- CF Policy 2.3 Evaluate and plan for future park and recreation needs of the community by creating a parks, recreation and open space (PROS) plan that is consistent with the Recreation and Conversation Office (RCO) guidelines qualifying Ruston for future grants.
- CF Policy 2.4 Design public facilities, to create well-designed links between facilities for pedestrians and bicycles that include lighting, and wayfinding.
- CF Policy 2.5 Pursue a long-term remediation and slope stabilization solution for Rust Park that includes a pedestrian crossing of the BNSF railroad tracks from Commercial Street to 51st Street in alignment with Bennett Street.
- CF Policy 2.6 Recognize the Winnifred Street median as a city park.
- CF Policy 2.7 Seek opportunities for collaborative efforts with other entities to achieve environmental and land use efficiencies to protect and enhance the natural environment.

Capital Facilities Goal 3: Ruston utilizes sound fiscal management of its capital facilities to provide needed improvements through various funding sources and by requiring new development to pay its fair share.

CF Policy 3.1	Develop a Capital Improvement Program—a six-year financial strategy outlining the financing of capital facilities and identifying funding sources.
CF Policy 3.2	Pursue grant funding whenever feasible to assist with capital facility priorities.
CF Policy 3.3	Require new development to pay its fair share of the cost of new facilities by implementing funding mechanisms such as SEPA mitigation, impact fees, and system development charges.
CF Policy 3.4	Assess traffic impacts of new development with a Complete Streets approach.
CF Policy 3.5	Consider the establishment of a fund for parking, pedestrian connectivity, and traffic calming improvements.
CF Policy 3.6	Anticipate and control demand for services to ensure that Ruston can maintain an appropriate level of service within its financial resources while serving new growth.
CF Policy 3.7	Seek opportunities for collaborative efforts with other entities to achieve financial efficiencies.

POLICY CONNECTIONS

Capital Facilities must be planned to accommodate future growth with adequate financing available. The **Land Use Element** and **Housing Element** each include policies and information about projected growth and housing.

The **Utilities Element** includes policies demonstrating how public services and utility infrastructure will serve existing and future land uses.

The **Transportation Element** outlines Ruston's Complete Streets approach, covering streets, bike facilities, sidewalks, on-street public parking, public transit facilities, wayfinding, and lighting. Transportation facilities are part of the Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), while all other capital facilities fall under the Six-Year Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

The **Community Character Element** includes policies to preserve community character while planning for Capital Facilities.

The **Shoreline Element** includes guidance on the placement of Capital Facilities within the shoreline jurisdiction.



Chapter 9

Shoreline



Introduction and Future Vision

The purpose of the Shoreline Master Program is to implement the Shoreline Management Act of 1971, which is based on the philosophy that the shorelines of the state are among the most valuable and fragile of its natural resources, and there is great concern throughout the state relating to their utilization, protection, restoration, and preservation. Coordinated planning is necessary in order to protect the public interest associated with the shorelines of the state while, at the same time, recognizing and protecting private property rights.

Ruston's Shoreline Master Program (SMP) fulfills the requirements of the Washington State Shoreline Management Act (SMA) and associated guidelines

"to prevent the inherent harm in an uncoordinated and piecemeal development of the state's shorelines." The SMP balances local needs, interests and character with the general public's interests in protecting key shoreline environments and important resources. The overarching goal is meant to strike a balance among private ownership, public access, and public protection of the state's shorelines.

SHORELINE GOALS

Shoreline Goal 1: To recognize the necessary clean-up and restoration of the former ASARCO site and guide Ruston in future development of its shoreline environment. Future development should include water-dependent, water-related, or water-oriented uses which contribute to the economic vitality and character of Ruston, and provide public access to the shoreline.

Shoreline Goal 2: To establish and implement policies and regulations for land use consistent with the Shoreline Management Act of 1971. These policies and regulations ensure that the overall land use patterns in shoreline areas are compatible with the high intensity shoreline environment designation and will be sensitive to and not degrade habitat, and ecological systems and other shoreline resources.

Shoreline Goal 3: To establish and implement policy goals for the following: Shoreline Use; Economic Development; Circulation; Conservation; Public Access; Recreation; and Historical/Culture.

SHORELINE POLICIES


General

SL-1 Support Ruston's SMP in promoting the health, safety and general welfare of the community by providing long range, comprehensive policies and effective, reasonable regulations for development, use, and restoration of Ruston's shorelines.

- SL-2** Encourage a balance among private owner^{ship}, public access, and public protection and ecological function of the state's shorelines in Ruston.
- SL-3** Encourage shoreline uses that protect water quality and the natural environment that depend on proximity to the shoreline, and preserve and enhance public access and public recreational opportunities.
- SL-4** Design new uses and developments to avoid and/or mitigate impacts to the environment while protecting property rights. Existing legally established uses should be allowed to continue as "grandfathered."
- SL-5** Support Ruston's SMP which requires "no net loss" of shoreline ecological functions. Provide a restoration program and enhancement incentives to offset the cumulative impacts of new shoreline uses and developments over time.
- SL-6** Support Ruston's SMP Policies: General; Shoreline Modification; Residential Use; Recreational Use; Transportation Use and Utility Use.

Archaeological, Historic and Cultural Resource

- SL-7** Ruston should work with tribal, state, federal and other local governments to identify significant local historic, cultural and archaeological sites consistent with applicable state and federal laws protecting such information from general public disclosure. Such sites should be protected, preserved and/or restored for study, education and/or public enjoyment to the maximum extent possible.
- SL-8** When a new use or development is proposed adjacent to an identified historic, cultural or archaeological site, it should be designed and operated to be compatible with continued protection of the historic, cultural or archaeological site.
- SL-9** Owners of property containing identified historic, cultural or archaeological sites should coordinate with appropriate tribes, and agencies such as the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation. Ample time should be allowed to assess the site and make arrangements to preserve historical, cultural and archaeological values.



SL-10  Shoreline use and development should not significantly and negatively impact, destroy, or damage any site having historic, cultural, scientific or educational value.

SL-11 Development plans for public open spaces, trails, or recreation lands should incorporate measures for historic, cultural and archaeological resource preservation, restoration, and education whenever compatible and possible.

Critical Areas and Environmental Protection

see Critical Areas Map in the appendix.

SL-12 New shoreline uses and developments should occur in a manner that maintains existing natural shorelines and assures no net loss of shoreline ecological functions and processes.

SL-13 New shoreline uses and developments should be designed and conducted in accordance with the regulations of this Program to minimize damage to the ecology and environment. These regulations  are designed to protect shoreline ecological functions and processes. Shoreline ecological functions that should be protected include, but are not limited to, fish and wildlife habitat, conservation and recovery of threatened or endangered species, food chain support and water temperature maintenance. Shoreline processes that should be protected include, but are not limited to, water flow; infiltration; groundwater recharge and discharge; sediment delivery, transport, and storage;  organic matter input; and nutrient and pathogen removal.

SL-14 In assessing the potential for net loss of ecological functions, both project-specific and cumulative impacts should be considered in accordance with WAC 173-26-186(8)(d).

SL-15 New shoreline uses and developments must be designed to protect the integrity of the cap over the ASARCO Superfund cleanup site and prevent arsenic from leaching into Commencement Bay. Projects should comply



with the Second Amendment to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Consent Decree, adopted June 29, 2006. A copy of the decree is available from the Ruston Clerk's Office.

Flood Hazard Reduction

- SL-16** Flood hazard reduction should be managed through Ruston's Comprehensive Plan and applicable development regulations.
- SL-17** New development within the floodplains associated with Ruston's shorelines that would individually or cumulatively increase the risk of flood damage should be discouraged.
- SL-18** Nonstructural flood hazard reduction measures should be given preference over structural measures. When necessary, structural flood hazard reduction measures should be accomplished in a manner that assures no net loss of ecological functions and ecosystem-wide processes. Nonstructural measures include setbacks, land use controls prohibiting or limiting development in areas that are historically flooded, stormwater management plans, or biomechanical measures.

Public Access Policies

- SL-19** Public access to shorelines should be incorporated into all private development projects, and publicly sponsored shoreline development projects when public health and safety concerns can be adequately addressed and when shoreline ecological functions and/or processes can be adequately protected.
- SL-20** The design of all public shoreline access areas should attempt to minimize potential impacts to private property.

Restoration and Enhancement

- SL-21** Ruston should participate in cooperative restoration efforts and programs between local, state, and federal public agencies, tribes, nonprofit organizations, and landowners to improve shorelines with impaired ecological functions and/or processes.
- SL-22** Restoration actions should improve shoreline functions, processes and/or features that meet the needs of important plant, wildlife and fish species.
- SL-23** Restoration should be integrated with and should support other natural resource management efforts in Pierce County, and in the greater Puget Sound region.
- SL-24** Priority should be given to restoration actions that meet the goals contained in the restoration element of this Program.

Shoreline Use

- SL-25** The following uses/developments should be given preference for locating within the shoreline jurisdiction when they are consistent with Ruston's zoning regulations and located, designed, and maintained in a manner that is consistent with this Program: Water-dependent and water-related uses and developments; and Public uses and developments that provide physical and/or visual access to the shoreline for substantial numbers of people.
- SL-26** Ruston should reserve areas for protection and restoration of ecological functions to control pollution, protect public health, and prevent damage to the environment.
- SL-27** Nonwater-oriented uses/developments should be limited to those shoreline locations where water-oriented uses are inappropriate.
- SL-28** Nonwater-oriented uses/developments should be allowed only when they demonstrably contribute to the objectives of the Shoreline Management Act.

- SL-29** Ruston should encourage activities that promote high intensity use of the shoreline that will complement the economic development goals of the Comprehensive Plan. Examples of uses that should be encouraged include commercial, hotel, and multifamily developments.



Shoreline Vegetation Conservation

- SL-30** New shoreline uses and developments should be planned and designed to retain or replace shoreline vegetation with the overall purpose of achieving no net loss of the ecological functions performed by the vegetation. Important functions of shoreline vegetation include, but are not limited to:

- Providing shade necessary to maintain water temperatures required by salmonids and other aquatic biota;
- Providing organic inputs necessary for aquatic life, including providing food in the form of various insects and other benthic macro invertebrates;
- Stabilizing banks, minimizing erosion and sedimentation, and reducing the occurrence/severity of landslides;
- Reducing sediment input into Commencement Bay by minimizing erosion, aiding infiltration, retaining runoff, and managing stormwater from roads and upland areas;
- Improving water quality by preventing wind mixing, and facilitating infiltration and vegetative uptake of nutrients and pollutants; and
- Providing habitat for wildlife, including connectivity for travel and migration corridors.

Site Planning

- SL-31** New shoreline uses and developments should be designed in a manner that directs land alteration to the least sensitive portions of the site to maximize vegetation conservation; minimize impervious surfaces and runoff; protect riparian, nearshore and wetland habitats; protect fish and wildlife and their

habitats; protect archaeological, historic and cultural resources; and preserve aesthetic values.

- SL-32** Low Impact Development (LID) stormwater management practices are encouraged where site conditions allow in order to minimize impervious surface area and surface runoff in accordance with the Low Impact Development: Technical Guidance Manual for Puget Sound, by Puget Sound Action Team and WSU 2005, and Ruston's stormwater management policies and regulations.

Water Quality, Stormwater and Nonpoint Pollution

- SL-33** New shoreline uses and developments are encouraged to be located, constructed, operated, and maintained to prevent water quality and storm water quantity impacts that would adversely affect shoreline ecological functions, or cause significant impact to shoreline aesthetics or recreational opportunities.
- SL-34** New shoreline uses and developments should be designed and operated to minimize the need for chemical fertilizers, pesticides or other chemical treatments to prevent contamination of surface and ground water and/or soils and minimize adverse effects on shoreline ecological functions.
- SL-35** New shoreline uses and developments are encouraged to minimize impervious surface and incorporate low impact development stormwater management techniques where reasonable to minimize surface water runoff and prevent water quality degradation.
- SL-36** Point and non-point source pollution should be managed on a comprehensive, basin-wide basis to protect water quality and support the efforts of shoreline property owners to maintain shoreline ecological functions.

Shoreline Modification

- SL-37** Ruston should assess regional needs for public boat launches so they can be co-located with other compatible water-dependent uses.
- SL-38** New or expanded public launch ramps and rails should only be sited where they have no negative impact on critical areas or habitat with which priority species have a primary association.
- SL-39** New private boat launch ramps and rails should be discouraged.
- SL-40** New public and private docks, floats, mooring buoys and lifts should be designed and constructed with appropriate mitigation as required by this Program to ensure no net loss of ecological functions.
- SL-41** The type, design, and location of docks, floats, mooring buoys and lifts should be consistent with applicable state and federal regulations and compatible with the area in which they are located. Ruston should consider shoreline characteristics, shoreline functions and processes, wind and wave action, water depth, aesthetics, and adjacent land and water uses when assessing compatibility.

Dredging

- SL-42** Dredging should only be allowed in the following circumstances:
- When needed to facilitate ecological restoration or enhancement;
 - When needed to construct facilities for public access, water-dependent transportation, or water-oriented public recreation.
- SL-43** New development should be sited and designed to avoid the need for maintenance dredging.
- SL-44** When allowed, dredging should be planned and operated to minimize adverse impacts to shoreline ecology, to existing shoreline uses, and to minimize interference with navigation.

- SL-45** Dredging for the primary purpose of obtaining fill material to create uplands is not allowed.




Filling and Excavation

- SL-46** Fill and excavation should be allowed only in association with a permitted use/development and where allowed should be the minimum necessary to accommodate the proposed use.
- SL-47** Filling and excavation should not be allowed where structural shoreline stabilization would be needed to prevent the fill from eroding.
- SL-48** The perimeter of fill and excavation activities should be designed to avoid or eliminate erosion and sedimentation impacts, both during initial fill and excavation activities and over time.
- SL-49** When allowed, filling and excavation should be conducted so that water quality, habitat, hydrology, and drainage patterns are not adversely affected.
- SL-50** Excavation waterward of Ordinary High Water Mark (OHWM) shall be considered dredging and shall be subject to the dredging policies and regulations of this Program.

Shoreline Stabilization

- SL-51** Proposed shoreline stabilization projects should not jeopardize the integrity of the existing riprap armoring used to cap the ASARCO Superfund clean-up site along the shoreline, or conflict with the requirements of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Consent Decree, (or its amendments), regarding methods of construction used to prevent leaching of arsenic into the waters of Commencement Bay.
- SL-52** New developments should be designed and located to avoid the need for new stabilization measures.

- SL-53** Bulkheads and other forms of hard structural shoreline stabilization should be discouraged. Bulkhead alternatives that implement bioengineering and bio-stabilization methods should be used where reasonable.
- SL-54** Shoreline stabilization including bulkheads and bulkhead alternatives should be located, designed, and maintained to minimize adverse effects on shoreline ecology, including effects on the project site and adjacent properties over time. Probable effects of proposed shoreline stabilization on ongoing shoreline processes and functions should be fully evaluated for consistency with this Program.
- SL-55**  Shoreline stabilization should be located and designed to fit the physical character of a specific shoreline reach, which may differ substantially from adjacent reaches.
- SL-56** Shoreline stabilization should not interfere with existing or future public access to public shorelines or with other appropriate shoreline uses.
- SL-57** Shoreline stabilization projects on public lands should be designed to accommodate multiple use, restoration, and/or public access, provided that safety and ecological protection are fully addressed.
- SL-58** Failing, harmful, unnecessary, or ineffective shoreline stabilization structures should be removed, and shoreline ecological functions should be restored using bulkhead alternatives.
- SL-59** Where existing legally established bulkheads are substantially repaired or replaced, property owners should make reasonable efforts to incorporate bioengineering and fisheries habitat enhancement design elements to minimize adverse effects on shoreline functions.

Residential Use

- SL-60** New residential developments should be encouraged to protect, enhance, and restore shoreline ecological functions using low impact development stormwater management techniques and other conservation measures.

SL-61 New residential developments shall provide public access to the shoreline.

SL-62 New residential developments shall not be comprised of single-family or duplex dwelling-unit types.

Recreational Use

SL-63 Public recreational development should be located on public lands to facilitate the public's ability to reach, touch, and enjoy the water's edge, to travel on the waters of the state, and to view the water and the shoreline.

SL-64 Public recreational development should incorporate public education regarding shoreline ecological functions and processes, the effect of human actions on the environment and the role of the public in shoreline management.

SL-65 Public recreational development should be located where existing infrastructure (utilities and roads) is adequate, or may be provided without significant damage to shoreline features commensurate with the number and concentration of anticipated users.

SL-66 Public recreational development should use low impact development stormwater management techniques and other methods that protect, enhance, and restore shoreline ecological functions where reasonable.

Transportation Use

SL-67 New public transportation uses and facilities should be located outside of the shoreline jurisdiction unless alternative locations are infeasible or the transportation facility is required to serve water-dependent public uses.

SL-68 When required, new transportation uses and facilities should be planned to fit the topographical characteristics of the shoreline and to minimize alterations to the shoreline environment.

- SL-69** When existing public transportation uses and facilities located within shoreline jurisdiction require maintenance or other improvements to address public health and safety, the maintenance/improvement should be designed and implemented to minimize additional impacts on the shoreline environment and consideration should be given to correcting past impacts caused by the transportation facility.
- SL-70** Public transportation development should use low impact development stormwater management techniques and other methods that protect, enhance, and restore shoreline ecological functions where reasonable.
- SL-71** Water-dependent transportation facilities such as ferry and cruise ship terminals should be encouraged.

Utility Use

- SL-72** New public or private utilities should be located inland from the land/water interface, preferably outside of shoreline jurisdiction, unless:
- They have a water-dependent component such as a water intake or outfall; or
 - Water crossings are unavoidable; or
 - Other locations are infeasible; or
 - They are required for authorized shoreline uses consistent with this Program.
- SL-73** Utilities should be located and designed to avoid public recreation and public access areas and significant natural, historic, archaeological or cultural resources.
- SL-74** Development of pipelines and cables, particularly those running roughly parallel to the shoreline, and development of facilities that may require periodic maintenance that would disrupt shoreline ecological functions, should be discouraged except where no other reasonable alternative exists.

- SL-75** When existing utilities located within shoreline jurisdiction require maintenance or other improvements to address public health and safety, the maintenance/improvement should be designed and implemented to minimize additional impacts on the shoreline environment and consideration should be given to correcting past impacts caused by the utility.
- SL-76** Public utility development should use low impact development stormwater management techniques and other methods that protect, enhance, and restore shoreline ecological functions where reasonable.

Environment Designations

- SL-77** In order to plan and effectively manage shoreline resources and to provide a uniform basis for applying policies and use regulations within distinctively different shoreline areas, a system of categorizing shoreline areas is required by the Shoreline Management Act. Environmental designations are based on existing development patterns, physical capabilities and limitations, as well as community aspirations.

Shoreline Designation and Official Shoreline Map

see Shoreline Designation and Official Shoreline Map in the appendix.

- SL-78** In areas located upland of the OHWM, the Ruston shoreline is designated as "high intensity". In areas located waterward of the ordinary high water mark, the Ruston shoreline is designated as "aquatic." The shoreline jurisdiction is delineated on a map and incorporated as a part of the SMP and known as the Official Shoreline Map.
- SL-79** The Official Shoreline Map is for planning purposes only. The map does not necessarily identify or depict the actual extent of shoreline jurisdiction or all associated wetlands. The lateral extent of the shoreline jurisdiction shall be determined on a case-by-case basis based on the location of the OHWM, floodway and/or the presence of associated wetlands. The landward extent

so determined may extend beyond that depicted on the Official Shoreline Map.

- SL-80** Areas within the shoreline jurisdiction that are not mapped and/or designated are automatically assigned an "urban conservancy" designation until the shoreline can be re-designated through a master program amendment.

High Intensity Environment

- SL-81** The purpose of the high intensity environment designation is to provide for commercial and recreational uses; high density residential uses in some locations; and public land uses while seeking opportunities for protection and restoration of ecological functions.
- SL-82** The high intensity designation is appropriate for areas that currently support or are planned for high intensity water-oriented uses including commercial, recreation, transportation or residential development.
- SL-83** High intensity designated areas are zoned for commercial and multifamily residential uses. Existing and planned uses in the high intensity designation represent a variety of water-oriented and nonwater-oriented uses such as retail businesses, hotels, restaurants, recreational uses, marinas, and multifamily residential uses.

Management Policies—Uses

- SL-84** Give priority to water-oriented uses over nonwater-oriented uses. First priority should be given to water-dependent uses. Second priority should be given to water-related uses and third priority to water-enjoyment uses. Nonwater-oriented uses shall only be allowed if they are part of mixed-use development where the primary use is (1) water dependent or (2) water related, or (3) in conjunction with a water-enjoyment use on sites where there is no access to water.

- SL-85** Encourage uses that enhance ecological functions and/or enhance opportunities for the public use and enjoyment of the shoreline; new development shall not cause a net loss of shoreline ecological functions.


High Intensity Environment – Management - Design Elements

- SL-86** Ensure that, where applicable, improvements within this district are reviewed for compatibility and consistency with all standards codified within the zoning code, including, but not limited to, height, setbacks, outdoor lighting, signs, and landscaping and screening standards.
- SL-87** Encourage designs that incorporate conservation and restoration elements, such as restoration of intertidal habitat, shoreline vegetation, and enhancement of public access.

High Intensity Environment – Management - Public Access

- SL-88** Each site shall plan for a public pedestrian walkway system along the high intensity waterfront utilizing a combination of natural beaches, pathways, piers, wharves, street ends, sidewalks, stairways, or other improvements. Each proposal for development shall provide continuous public access from the nearest public right-of-way and extending along the site's entire shoreline frontage which is developed in accordance with the shoreline public access use requirements located elsewhere in this Program.
- SL-89** Each site shall provide designs that enhance pedestrian traffic without impeding vehicular traffic through the use of paving textures, fencing, landscaping, and signage that make a greater distinction between automobile traffic and pedestrian circulation systems.

Aquatic Environment

- SL-90**  The purpose of the aquatic environment designation is to protect, restore, and manage the unique characteristics and resources of the areas waterward of the OHWM.
- SL-91** Designation Criteria. The aquatic environment designation is appropriate for all areas within Ruston that are located waterward of the OHWM.

Aquatic Environment - Management

- SL-92** Allow new over-water structures only for water-dependent uses, public access, or ecological restoration.
- SL-93** The size of new over-water structures should be limited to the minimum necessary to support the structure's intended use.
- SL-94** In order to reduce the impacts of shoreline development and increase effective use of water resources, multiple-use over-water facilities should be encouraged.
- SL-95** All developments and uses on navigable waters or their beds should be located and designed to minimize interference with surface navigation, to consider impacts to public views, and to allow for the safe, unobstructed passage of fish and wildlife, particularly those species dependent on migration.
- SL-96** Uses that adversely impact the ecological functions of critical saltwater and freshwater habitats should not be allowed except where necessary to achieve the objectives of RCW 90.58.020, and then only when their impacts are mitigated according to the sequence described in WAC 173-26-201-(2)(e) as necessary to assure no net loss of ecological functions.
- SL-97** Shoreline uses and modifications should be designed and managed to prevent degradation of water quality and alteration of natural hydrographic conditions.

CITY OF RUSTON WASHINGTON

Appendix



Appendices

- A. Critical Areas Map
- B. Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (6-year TIP)
- C. Buildable Lands Analysis for Ruston
- D. Shoreline Designations and Official Shoreline Map
- E. Landmark Opportunity Sites
- F. Non-Motorized User Accessibility Index
- G. Housing Equity Report
- H. Point Ruston Final Supplemental EIS and Amendments

CITY OF RUSTON WASHINGTON

Appendix A

Critical Areas Maps

CITY OF RUSTON WASHINGTON

Appendix B

Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (6-year TIP)

CITY OF RUSTON WASHINGTON

Appendix C

Buildable Lands Analysis for Ruston

CITY OF RUSTON WASHINGTON

Appendix D

Shoreline Designations and Official Shoreline Map

CITY OF RUSTON WASHINGTON

Appendix E

Landmark Opportunity Sites



CITY OF RUSTON WASHINGTON



Appendix F

Non-Motorized User Accessibility Index

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Appendix G

Housing Equity Report

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Appendix H

Point Ruston Final Supplemental EIS and Amendments