

# CHAPTER 10

## UTILITIES ELEMENT

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### INTRODUCTION

City residents rely on a number of basic services that help define their quality of life and maintain their health and well-being. Water sewer services, solid waste pickup, electricity, and telecommunications access are considered utilities. These services are usually taken for granted. Yet without coordination and conscientious planning for future growth, service may be interrupted, inadequate or prohibitively expensive.

The purpose of this Element is to facilitate coordination between utility providers and Electric City. Such coordination will ensure that new facilities provided are compatible with planned growth and that utility planning is done in conjunction with land use. While planning for utilities is the primary responsibility of the utility provider, this Element identifies issues and policies related to the provision of utilities that are important to the community.

Utilities included in this element are water, sewer, power, telecommunications, and cable television. In addition, this element discusses the services provided by special districts such as Port of Grant County. Virtually all land uses require one or more of the utilities discussed in this element. Local land use decisions drive the need for new or expanded public and private utility facilities. Expansion of utility systems is a function of the demand for mandated and/or reliable service that people, land uses, and activities place on the systems.

### RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS

#### ***Growth Management***

The 1990 Washington State Growth Management Act requires that local comprehensive plans include a utilities element. According to the Act the utilities element shall, at a minimum, consist of “the general location, proposed location, and capacity of all existing and proposed utilities, including but not limited to, electrical lines, telecommunication lines and natural gas lines. In addition, the State guidelines for implementing the GMA (Chapter 365-195 WAC) state that policies be adopted which call for:

1. Joint use of transportation rights-of-way and utility corridors, where possible;

2. Timely and effective notification of interested utilities of road construction, and of maintenance and upgrades of existing roads to facilitate coordination of public and private utility trenching activities; and
3. Consideration of utility permits simultaneously with the proposals requesting service and, when possible, approval of utility permits when the project to be served is approved.

### ***County-wide Planning and Policies***

The adopted County-Wide Planning Policy calls for all Grant County jurisdictions to coordinate planning efforts, including provision of current and future utilities, to address future growth in a coherent manner that leads to more efficient delivery of services.

### ***Columbia Basin Ground Water Management Area***

Adams, Franklin and Grant counties petitioned the Washington State Department of Ecology in 1997 to form the Columbia Basin Ground Water Management Area (GWMA). Ecology signed the order creating the Columbia Basin GWMA on February 4, 1998.

Funded by local, state and federal sources, the GWMA program consists of water monitoring and characterization, public information and education, and implementation and research. A series of ground water advisory committees were formed to oversee the work program and make program recommendations to the executive committee. The executive committee reviews the recommendations of the various committees and presents final recommendations to the local conservation districts and the Boards of County Commissioners of each county, who report to Ecology.

Six agencies agreed to participate in the program and in the development and implementation of locally driven solutions to address ground water quality issues in areas of documented nitrate concern. Local agricultural industry representatives are also supportive of the GWMA program. A summary report was released in 2012.

### ***Grant County Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan Update***

In 2008, Grant County completed an update of their Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) to comply with the requirements of the 1989 Waste Not Washington Act. Through the Grant County Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC), the SWMP established the following goals:

- Encourage waste reduction and recycling in Grant County;
- Provide cost-effective and environmentally sound collection and disposal of solid waste; and

- Educate and involve Grant County citizens in waste reduction and recycling efforts and in responsible waste management. The SWMP included recommendations regarding:
  - waste reduction and recycling;
  - collection, transfer and disposal of waste;
  - waste import and export;
  - biosolids and septage management;
  - special waste handling;
  - illegal dumping; and
  - system administration.

The SWMP is a guide for managing solid waste for Grant County and its fifteen cities and towns. The SWMP planning period was 2005 through 2025. The SWMP and its recommendations form the basis of the solid waste section of this Element.

## MAJOR ISSUES

### *Service Provision*

As growth occurs, utilities will need to be upgraded, extended or developed. As requests for services are received, several important questions must be answered.

- What type of water and wastewater facilities are needed and desirable in which locations: Who (i.e., what institution, municipality, public or private entity or other service provider) should provide them? Who should own them and be responsible for their operation?
- What level of service is appropriate for each type of utility in urban and rural areas?
- In what ways does development of land within an irrigation district affect the supply of potable ground water, the availability of surface water for commercial agriculture (as opposed to pasture or lawns), and efficient irrigation system management?

To answer these questions, and to ensure that growth is promoted in the desired manner, the City must coordinate with all service providers. Within the unincorporated portions of the Urban Growth Area, the City Grand Coulee, Grant County, special purpose district/associations and comprehensive plan should be consulted first to determine service providers and the planned timing of service.

In addition, the City's role in providing these utility services may need to be defined. This could be accomplished through the development of consolidated water systems plans

and a sewerage general plan. The responsibility for the implementation of these plans would be defined through interlocal agreements between the City and the service providers.

### ***Coordination Among Service Providers***

Electric City needs to coordinate with private utility companies and other regional jurisdictions so that utilities may provide high-quality and reliable services to their customers and to plan for future development and expansion of utility facilities. The siting of utility facilities requires coordination with Electric City's land use plan (Chapter 5) so that they will be sited in a manner reasonably compatible with adjacent land uses. In order to site utility facilities in a reasonably compatible manner, the City may investigate development standards that require some utilities to be located underground, in accordance with any rates and tariffs, as well as with the public service obligations applicable to the servicing utility.

Electric City also must coordinate with service providers of public utilities in order to provide efficient service, solve utility problems, and accommodate growth. The City's role in providing these services should be redefined through the development of consolidated water system plans and a general sewerage plan. Where urban utility services cannot be provided by the City, special district or private provider economically or equitably, the City may need to become a partner with the service provider.

### ***Concurrency and Implications for Growth***

As development occurs, system and facility improvements must keep pace with the higher demand. The improvements must take place within predetermined time frames to maintain appropriate levels of service. To ensure concurrency, the City must address the following questions.

- At what density or level of development is it feasible to provide each type of utility (water, sewer, telephone, natural gas, electricity, internet or cellular phone access)?
- Is there a public cost, as well as a private cost, when these services are provided (e.g. aesthetic damage, obstruction of views, environmental damage, odor)?
- What is the City's role in assuring that the level of service provision is appropriate to the type and density of development that is occurring? Should the City require that certain services be available before development can occur in certain areas, or at certain densities?

### ***Environmental Sensitivity***

Important environmental issues associated with planned utility improvements must be addressed. They include the following utilities.

- Sewer: What are the impacts associated with pipeline construction? How can the specialized wastewater requirements of different industrial and commercial operations be accommodated?
- Water: What water withdrawal impacts of well development?
- Aesthetics: How can views be protected from excessive numbers of unsightly towers and lines? When (or in which areas) and what types of utilities should the City require to be buried?

## **REGULATORY SETTING**

### ***Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission***

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC) is responsible for regulating privately owned utility and transportation businesses in the state. The WUTC is a three-member board appointed by the governor and confirmed by the state senate. It is the WUTC's responsibility to see that companies provide safe and reliable service to their customers at reasonable rates. The WUTC regulates private utilities only (including but not limited to, electric, gas, irrigation, telecommunication, and water companies).

Publicly owned utilities (such as the City's water system) are regulated by their respective legislative bodies.

WUTC mandates that utility facilities and service must be provided on a uniform or nondiscriminatory basis to all customers and that cost of service must be equitable. State law regulates the rates and charges, services, facilities, and practices of utilities. Any change in customer charges or service provision policy requires WUTC approval.

In accordance with state law, private utilities have an obligation to provide service upon demand. In other words, utility companies must provide service to customers within their service territory as it is requested. This is known as a utility's duty to serve. Consistent with this duty, utility providers follow growth and will provide service to development both within and outside of urban growth areas (in accordance with service territories). Private utilities are therefore not a distinguishing factor in delineating "urban" from "rural" areas.

There are other federal and state agencies that impose requirements on utilities. The Washington State Department of Health (WDOH) has jurisdiction over water purveyors, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and Department of Energy have jurisdiction over electric power service, and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has

jurisdiction over the telecommunications industry.

### ***Federal Energy Regulatory Commission***

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is an independent five-member commission with the U. S. Department of Energy. FERC establishes rates and charges for the interstate transport and sale of natural gas, for the transmission and sale of electrical power, and for the licensing of hydroelectric power projects. In addition, the commission establishes rates and charges for the interstate transport of oil via pipeline.

## **PUBLIC UTILITIES**

### ***Electricity***

#### **Grant County Public Utility District**

The Grant County Public Utility District (District), located in Central Washington, is a municipal corporation of the State of Washington. The District was organized in 1938 pursuant to a general election in accordance with the Enabling Act and commenced operations in 1942. The District's Electric System serves all of Electric City. The District's administrative offices are located in Ephrata.

Pursuant to Washington statutes, the District is administered by a Board of Commissioners made up of five elected members. The legal responsibilities and powers of the District, including the establishment of rates and charges for services rendered, are exercised through the Commission. The Commission establishes policy, approves plans, budgets and expenditures and reviews the District's operations.

### ***Water Supply Systems***

The City operates 3 wells, has 420,000 gallons of storage in 2 reservoirs.

### ***Sewer Systems***

The City contracts with the City of Grand Coulee for wastewater treatment under an agreement signed in     . The communities are discussing updating the agreement in the near future.

## **PRIVATE UTILITIES**

### ***Telecommunications***

Telecommunications is the transmission of data or information by wire, radio, optical cable, electromagnetic, or other similar means. In Electric City, telecommunication utilities include telephone, cellular telephone, and cable television. In 1996, the Federal government passed the Telecommunications Act, which, among other things, deregulated the provision of data and information. The Telecommunications Act was intended to promote competition in this vastly changing and expanding industry. In 2012, Congress passed the “Spectrum Act” which preempts local governments from limiting reconstruction and upgrading of existing wireless communications facilities. Electric City is presently served by Century Link, Charter Communications and Grant County PUD Telecommunications.

Considerable expansion of the telecommunications industry has occurred as a result of expanded licensing by the FCC and technological innovation.

### ***Telephone***

Telephone service for Electric City is provided by Century Link. Telephone service is initiated by customer demand and requests. Telephone service providers are required to provide adequate telecommunications service on demand (RCW 80.36.090). Accordingly, telephone service providers will provide facilities to accommodate whatever growth patterns occur. Since telephone service providers do not generally conduct detailed, long-range planning activities, no specific projects have been identified by Century Link at this time. General improvements to expand service to meet the projected future demand include constructing additional fiber optic cable, copper cable, and switching stations.

### ***Cellular Telephone***

Cellular telecommunication allows people to have mobile telephone communication via radios, which send and receive signals from a network of receivers placed at several cellular communication (“cell”) sites.

Cell sites are placed on tall poles, lattice-type towers or on existing buildings. Each cell site has a coverage area of several miles, depending on topography and number of customers. As the cellular telephone user moves from one cell to the next, the call is passed to an open channel at an adjacent cell site. Transmission quality and dialing of cellular telephones are comparable to that of conventional wire line telephones. The

primary difference between cellular and conventional telephone systems is that cellular phones don't need wire.

Cellular companies are licensed to operate in the City and throughout the region within guidelines set by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Citing and design of towers is regulated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and local zoning authority. The City does not have any regulations governing such towers.

The cellular system is expanding in response to several factors: customer growth, shifts in population distribution patterns, and/or a decrease in service quality or reliability (measured by the record of dropped calls or complaints of poor sound quality). In general, cellular system growth follows trends in population density along the higher volume transportation corridors.

### ***Cable Television***

The primary provider of cable television service in Electric City is Charter Communications. Other providers may be accessed through the Grant PUD Fiber network. Any future expansion that does occur will be completed as technology, market demand, and return on investment allows.

### ***Columbia Basin Project and Irrigation Districts***

From the time settlers began to arrive in Grant County, irrigation of the vast area has been a focus of both the people and government. The Columbia Basin Project (Project), managed by the Bureau of Reclamation (BoR) within the U.S. Department of Interior, is an ongoing large-scale irrigation project to meet these needs.

The Project is located in central Washington and currently serves a total area of approximately 671,000 acres in platted farm units, which includes portions of Grant, Lincoln, Adams, and Franklin Counties, with some northern facilities located in Douglas County. The Project is a multipurpose development that includes power production, flood control, and recreation, as well as irrigation. Continued development of the system to provide irrigation water to additional project lands not yet served is being considered.

The Project consists of several major facilities and features including over 300 miles of main canals, 2,000 miles of laterals, and over 3,500 miles of drains and wasteways. The Grand Coulee Dam, the project's key structure, is located on the main stem of the Columbia River a few miles north of Electric City. The Grand Coulee Pump-Generating Plant lifts irrigation water about 280 feet from Franklin D. Roosevelt Lake to Banks Lake, which serves as an equalizing reservoir for the irrigation system. The Main Canal transports flow southward from Banks Lake at Dry Falls Dam to the northern end of the irrigable area.

Responsibility for operating and maintaining the Project is divided among three



irrigation districts and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

### ***Levels of Service***

The purpose of Level of Service (LOS) standards is to adequately serve both current and future residents of Electric City without compromising the service they receive. LOS standards have been established in Chapter 9 – Capital Facilities Element and in the Capital Facilities Plan.

### ***Needs Assessment***

#### ***Solid Waste Collection***

Collection services for the incorporated areas of Electric City are presented in Table 10-1. Collection in the unincorporated areas is regulated by the WUTC and is provided by four private collection companies. Sunrise Disposal, Inc. serves the northern portion of the County, including the incorporated areas of Grand Coulee and Electric City.

**Table 10-1**  
**Solid Waste Collection Services**

<b>Incorporated Area</b>	<b>Collection Service</b>	<b>Type of Arrangement</b>	<b>Disposal Site</b>
Electric City	Sunrise Disposal, Inc.	Individual	Delano Transfer Station/Ephrata

Grant County operates the Ephrata Landfill. Near Ephrata, WA, this modern landfill was expanded in 2004 to a lined facility with a leachate and gas collection system. The Delano Landfill was closed in [REDACTED]. Located on a 45 acre parcel north of the City, of which only a portion has been used for the land fill, the site is now the location of the Delano Transfer Station and receives about 9,600 tons of MWS annually.

#### **Waste Reduction and Recycling**

Electric City uses an informal waste reduction program, relying predominantly on public information and education programs such as posters and pamphlets. In recent years, the City has expanded their public awareness program through broad-based education campaigns.

Residential recycling is provided primarily through a network of private dropoff or buy-back sites.

### **Biosolids and Septage**

Biosolids and septage generated from both municipal and industrial wastewater treatment plants are predominantly land applied in Grant County. Land application is regulated by the County Health District and Department of Ecology.

### **Level of Service**

Levels of service for solid waste management system components are established through capacity analysis, which estimates the number of years before an improvement or alternative is required. This approach is well suited for solid waste systems since they must already meet stringent federal, state and local standards for service, capacity and development.

The LOS for solid waste facilities examines the availability of the system components, including the number of disposal sites, recycling facilities, and drop box collection facilities. This Plan uses an A through C level of service standard for the quality of service provided by the solid waste management system.

Electric City adopts LOS B as the minimum standard for solid waste management system components.

### **Existing Deficiencies & Mitigation**

Collection: Collection system meets or exceeds LOS B and provides adequate service. No deficiencies are identified.

Transfer: Transfer system meets or exceeds LOS B and provides convenient access and service. No deficiencies are identified.

Waste Reduction & Recycling: Electric City has not yet implemented all of the waste reduction and recycling programs recommended in the 1995 SWMP Update. A waste reduction and recycling program should be implemented to satisfy the recommendations of the SWMP.

Disposal: The Delano Landfill is closed and the Ephrata Landfill is in compliance with the requirements of WAC 173-304;

### **Future Deficiencies**

The 2004 expansion and upgrade of the Ephrata Landfill and closing of the Delano Landfill has resulted in a solid waste collection and disposal system projected to remain at LOS B or above for the life of this plan.

**Proposed Improvements**

No improvements are presently required.

***Public Utilities*****Grant County Public Utility District**

The Grant County Public Utility District (District) plans to continue to improve and extend the facilities of the Electric System as necessary to serve the growing loads in its service area. The District is continually researching means to expand supply and upgrade equipment. System planners design and build their systems to follow population and employment growth projections based on county and city plans. The electricity load is determined from these plans and projections. An electric system plan is then developed to serve those loads at prescribed reliability levels, taking into account environmental, economic, financial, and operational factors. Utility construction is coordinated with the appropriate jurisdictions and agencies and is typically phased in as actual growth occurs.

Future electrical service plans are not only designed to provide for future growth and accommodate new and increased load. They also include changes to the existing systems to improve reliability, power quality, and looping of the system for redundancy backup service.

The District takes a proactive approach to system capacity, developing its system in anticipation of eventual growth. In general, the Electric System is well planned, operated, and maintained to provide reliable service to the District's customers.

**Water Supply Systems**

*Need City Water Plan*

**Sewer Systems**

Current and future deficiencies for sewer facilities within Urban Growth Areas should be provided within the C's comprehensive plan. This would allow the City to better assess growth in unincorporated urban growth areas and to identify areas where cities or special purpose districts either cannot or will not address sewer service deficiencies. Should sewer service deficiencies arise, it may be necessary for another service provider to step in.

***Private Utilities*****Telecommunication Utilities**

The rapidly changing telecommunications industry has transformed the way service is delivered. Cellular, wireless and fiber optics are blurring the distinctions that separate data, video and voice technologies. As a result, assessing the future configuration of telecommunications service is very difficult.

Telephone service providers are required to provide adequate telecommunications service on demand (RCW 80.36.090). Accordingly, telephone service providers will provide facilities to accommodate whatever growth patterns occur. According to Century Link, however, the delivery of telecommunication services sometimes does not coincide with the exact location of customers. Many of the telecommunication facilities, including aerial and underground, are co-located with those of the electrical power provider.

In general, telecommunication utility providers continually look for ways to expand, upgrade and maintain competitive systems. Where not required by law, future expansions will occur as technology, market demand, and return on investment allows.

## **GOALS AND POLICIES**

Goals and policies follow the shared vision for the future of Electric City for sustaining and improving our quality of life. Goals and policies are also consistent with the Planning Goals of the Growth Management Act. Goals are broad statements of a community's aspirations. Policies express a commitment to a course of action. Policies provide overall direction for implementation of a strategy. Policies provide clear guidance for decision-making subject to this Plan and form the basis for development regulations. Goals and policies for Utilities are contained in Chapter 4 Policy Plan.