

Friday Harbor UGA Frequently Asked Questions

The following questions and answers have been prepared to provide basic information to the public. If you have other questions, please email Colin Maycock, Senior Planner, at colinm@co.san-juan.wa.us, or call (360) 370-7573.

PLEASE NOTE that the county proposes to approach the UGA expansion in two phases. The first phase to be considered incorporates only the area proposed for expansion by the Town, specifically the pink area highlighted on the map.

QUESTION 1: What is a UGA?

ANSWER: Conceptually speaking, the Urban Growth Area (UGA) is a central tenet of the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA). The GMA holds that there are only TWO categories of land in Washington, Rural and Urban, (each of which can be further classified according to location specific characteristics). On the one hand, all rural lands share two characteristics; 1. It doesn't come in lots any smaller than 5 acres (on aggregate) and, 2. Housing units built in rural areas are not connected to large scale sewer and water services.¹ Urban lands on the other hand, may have no less than a minimum of 4 housing units per acre (and potentially many, many more) and are connected to large scale sewer and water systems. The central purpose behind this strict distinction between Rural and Urban is to encourage an increasingly larger percentage of the state's total population to live in denser urban areas rather than sprawling suburbs.

Given that there are only two categories of land within the planning sphere, the question, how does rural land become urban, arises. Providing transitional space between the rural and the urban is the function of the Urban Growth Area.

The size and shape of UGA's are determined by a number of related elements, the most important of which is the 20-year projected population growth disseminated by the State Office of Financial Management.

In specific terms, the Friday Harbor Urban Growth Area is territory identified by the County and Town governments as sufficient to meet the need of the population expected in the next 20 years. This area, once designated, MAY be annexed by the town, rezoned and connected to public sewer and water systems.

QUESTION 2: How will being in the unincorporated UGA affect me?

ANSWER: At this moment, (September 2007) within the current regulations, if your property is brought into the UGA the initial impact is expected to be negligible. Your land use designation and density designation will not be effected.

Future subdivisions and short subdivisions will be governed by standards set forth in proposed SJC Comprehensive Plan, Appendix 3, Friday Harbor Unincorporated Urban Growth Area Management Agreement, Section 7, #5.

¹ Naturally there are exceptions to these principles, particularly for territory platted prior to the adoption of the Growth Management Act; however, they work as a generic rule of thumb.

QUESTION 3: If my property is part of the Friday Harbor unincorporated UGA, does this mean that my property is now part of the Town?

ANSWER: No. Inclusion in the UGA does not move your property into the jurisdiction of the Town of Friday Harbor. Inclusion in the UGA is, however, a necessary precursor to annexation by the Town.

In order for your property to become part of the town of Friday Harbor, it must be annexed by the Town. The annexation process is governed by state regulations and local policies. In essence, annexation boils down to an agreement between the landowner and the town government in which the landowner makes a request to be brought into the town's jurisdiction. Please contact Michael Bertrand, Land Use Administer, for the Town for further information on annexation – mikeb@fridayharbor.org , or call (360) 378-2810.

QUESTION 4: How will annexation work for parcels in the UGA that are currently zoned “commercial”?

ANSWER: Specific land use regulations, such as development standards, allowed uses etc will be determined by the Town of Friday Harbor at the time at which the property in question is annexed into the Town.

QUESTION 5: What options will be open to parcels abutting these “commercial” parcels?

ANSWER: The Town of Friday Harbor will consider Land Use designations at the time of annexation.

QUESTION 6: What is the difference between the pink, light blue and dark blue areas identified on the County's proposed UGA map?

ANSWER: Pink areas were identified by the Town to be included in the UGA. Light and dark blue areas were identified by the County for inclusion in the UGA. Light blue areas were considered as areas not currently developed to urban densities. Dark blue areas represent commercial lands, the County fairgrounds and developed residential areas.

QUESTION 7: What is the “market factor” referred to in calculating land use needs?

ANSWER: “Market factor” is the term given to the additional percentage of undeveloped land within the UGA needed to recognize that not every property owner will develop their land within the 20 year planning period. In this instance, the Town determined the market factor to be 20%.

QUESTION 8: What will the zoning and design standards be for land within the proposed unincorporated UGA?

ANSWER: Zoning and design standards will be determined by the Town in conjunction with the annexation process.

QUESTION 9: Is there adequate infrastructure (sewer, water, roadways etc) to provide service to the proposed expansion of the unincorporated UGA?

ANSWER: To establish an expanded UGA it must be demonstrated that sufficient infrastructure can be developed to serve the area within the 20 year planning horizon. The County and Town are collaborating to conduct the infrastructure needs and costs analysis.

QUESTION 10: At what point in the expansion process, are impacts – environmental, traffic, view corridor, and so on – considered?

ANSWER: As a non-project action, a Determination of Non-Significance is the most likely initial finding. Expected and generic impacts, however, are evaluated at the outset of the UGA designation process. Such evaluations are likely to be superseded over time as increasingly accurate information becomes available and individual development projects are brought forward.

QUESTION 11: At what point in the expansion process are density and zoning considered?

ANSWER: Density and zoning are determined by the Town of Friday Harbor at the time of Annexation.

QUESTION 12: What is the next step in the process?

ANSWER: A public hearing before the San Juan County Planning Commission is scheduled on Friday, October 19, 2007 to consider the proposed 2027 UGA boundary and proposed revisions to SJC Comprehensive Plan Appendix 2, Joint Planning Policies, and SJC Comprehensive Plan Appendix 3, Friday Harbor Unincorporated Urban Growth Area Management Agreement, which can be found on this website.