

Annexation

Annexation is the process by which cities add land to their boundaries to accommodate growth and provide municipal services. The Growth Management Act anticipates that designated urban growth areas will become part of cities over the 20-year planning period, and that cities are generally the appropriate provider of urban services. This chapter contains policies intended to facilitate an orderly and smooth transition of property currently in the Vancouver Urban Growth Area into the Vancouver city limits.

Specifics

- ▶ **State and local legal framework**
- ▶ **Annexation procedure**
- ▶ **Vancouver’s annexation history**
- ▶ **Future direction and annexation policies**

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Annexation in 2003

AnneXation may occur through various means under state statute and local regulations. The State of Washington's Growth Management Act of 1990 (GMA) requires counties to establish 20-year Urban Growth Area (UGA) boundaries to accommodate for projected growth, and encourages cities to annex lands within the UGA and provide urban-level services to these areas. Lands outside the UGA cannot be annexed.

The *Community Framework Plan* (Appendix A) adopted by Clark County, Vancouver, and other local cities also encourages annexation of lands in the UGA. The *Community Framework Plan* establishes County support for such annexations as long as they are consistent with the annexation elements adopted by Vancouver in the *City of Vancouver 10-Year Annexation Blueprint (Blueprint)*.

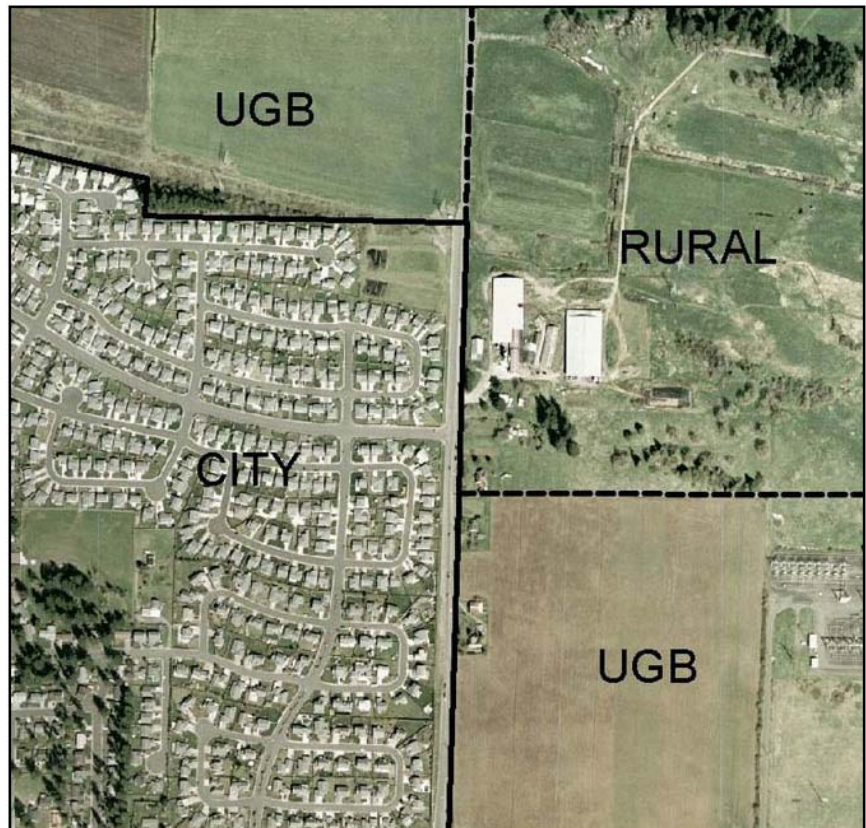
The *Blueprint* was adopted by the City of Vancouver in 1993 and updated in 1995 and 1997.

It is intended to provide opportunities for the City, County and special service districts to assess potential impacts, including fiscal impacts. The *Blueprint* prioritizes areas in the UGA to be annexed, while defining conceptual timelines. Annexation of these areas can occur as set out in the *Blueprint*. Larger or smaller annexations can also be processed depending on the level of support available.

Annexations can be initiated by property owners or cities. When an annexation is initiated by a city, local support is required. This support is generally provided through an election or petitions. The election method requires approval

of the majority of voters in the annexation area, or 60 percent if the proposal includes the assumption of indebtedness. The petition method requires petitions signed by landowners representing the majority of acreage in the annexation territory, and also by the majority of registered voters in the area if there are any. Proposed annexations in Clark County are reviewed by the local Boundary Review Board to ensure proposed areas are logical and practical based on service areas, physical boundaries, existing communities, and other factors. Other methods for municipal annexation are available for specific circumstances but are rarely applicable.

The City of Vancouver has annexed land 125 times since it was incorporated in 1857, primarily through the petition method. The 1990s were a particularly active period, with the City annexing 29 square miles in the Vancouver Mall and Cascade Park areas. The 1997 Cascade Park annexation was the largest in state history, and added



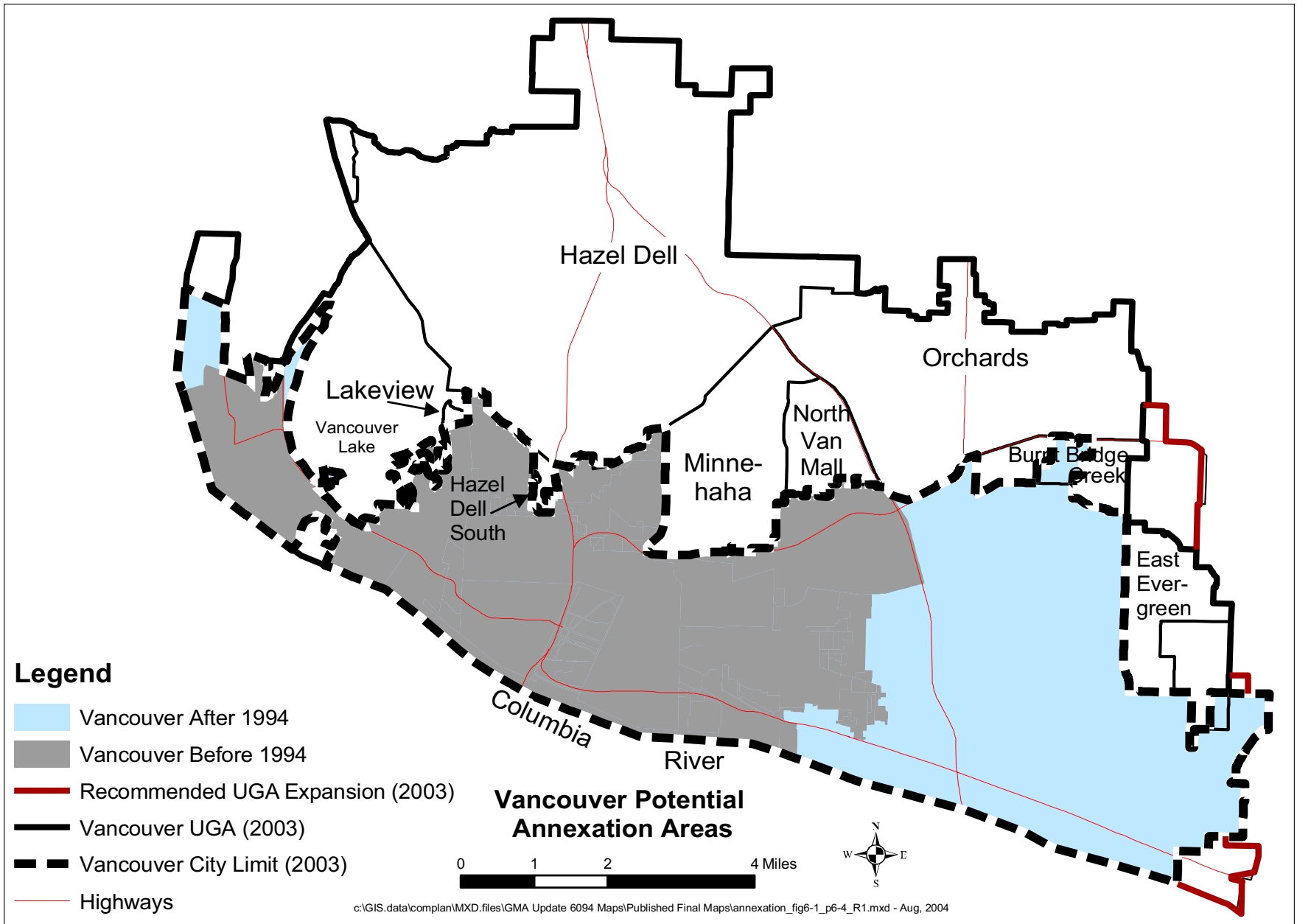


Figure 6-1. Vancouver potential annexation areas. Source: City of Vancouver GIS.

almost 60,000 persons to the City. As of 2003, Vancouver's city limits encompassed approximately 46 square miles, and the unincorporated Vancouver Urban Growth Area (VUGA) encompassed about 56 square miles, including County-proposed expansions. Most of the unincorporated VUGA is characterized by existing urban development, and provided with either City of Vancouver or non-municipal sewer and water services.

Direction for the future

The City of Vancouver supports annexation to provide a full range of urban services and efficiencies to developing and developed urban areas. The City will work closely with the community, Clark County, and service providers to determine annexation issues that exist in specific areas, and to develop and implement annexation plans. Vancouver will require annexation or agreements to annex as a condition of extending municipal sewer and water services. Larger annexations will be generally preferable because of service efficiencies, and to keep neighborhoods and communities intact. **Figure 6-1** shows areas envisioned for annexation in the unincorporated VUGA. More specific annexation plans and policies are contained in the *City of Vancouver 10-Year Annexation Blueprint*, scheduled to be updated in 2004.

For more information:

- The *City of Vancouver 10-Year Annexation Blueprint* establishes Vancouver annexation priorities and conceptual timelines.
- The *Community Framework Plan* (Appendix A) contains regional annexation policies in its Annexation and Incorporation Element.

Annexation policies

The City of Vancouver adopts the following policies to ensure orderly urban transition and efficient delivery of urban services. These policies are consistent with and implement Policy Section 9.0 of the *Community Framework Plan*, adopted by Clark County and local jurisdictions, and planning policies 36.70.A.020(2), (11) and (12) of the Washington Growth Management Act (see Appendix A).

A-1 Coordination with Clark County

Work with Clark County to facilitate future annexation of lands within the unincorporated VUGA, to facilitate infrastructure maintenance prior to annexation, and to advance Vancouver as a provider of urban services and Clark County as a provider of regional services.

A-2 Annexation before service extensions

To receive City-provided urban services, developing or developed unincorporated areas should annex or commit to annexation.

A-3 Annexation sequence

Unincorporated subareas should be annexed in the general sequence identified in the *City of Vancouver 10-Year Annexation Blueprint*.

A-4 Responsive annexation timelines

Annexation timelines should be responsive to the interests of citizens and Vancouver's ability to provide services.

A-5 Large annexations encouraged

Annexation of large areas should be encouraged, although individual property owners should not be prevented from pursuing annexation. Annexations should include both sides of streets and roads, including rights-of-way.

A-6 Service transition

Explore creative ways to facilitate the transition of government services, particularly public safety, transportation, parks, utilities, and land use review.

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