



# PACKWOOD SUBAREA PLAN – PHASE 1



## **20-Year Vision**

**Packwood is a vibrant small town that embraces its history, encourages unique local businesses, provides a diversity of affordable housing options, supports existing and new residents, preserves the natural environment, encourages tourism and promotes community events.**

## Acknowledgments

This plan is the culmination of two years of work with the community of Packwood. Many thanks to the Community Advisory Committee, residents, business owners and interested citizens who filled out surveys, attended community meetings, agreed to be interviewed and invited staff to their homes and businesses to provide input on the plan.

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Attachment A: Public Participation Results	
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*2019 Downtown Packwood*

## 1: INTRODUCTION

The Packwood Subarea Plan is a long-range vision, goals and policies that will guide Packwood's growth and development over the next 20 years. Phase 1 of the Packwood Plan was developed in collaboration with the community and guided by a 35-member Community Advisory Committee who met monthly during 2022-2023. Additional community input was gathered through surveys, interviews and community meetings (see Attachment A). Technical experts were consulted at key moments during the creation of the plan to coordinate on specific issues such as the capacity of Lewis County Water Sewer District 3 to serve new development.

The subarea plan, Phase 1, includes goals and policies that address the following topics:

- Community
- Land Use
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Transportation
- Recreation and Environment
- Public Facilities

Two supporting documents were also developed. The documents are attached to the Packwood Subarea Plan, but do not amend the Lewis County Comprehensive Plan. The supporting documents are:

Attachment A: Packwood Subarea Plan Public Participation (*online*)

Attachment B: Packwood Existing Conditions Report (*online*)

The Packwood Subarea Plan amends the Lewis County Comprehensive Plan and conforms to the Growth Management Act rules set forth in RCW 36.70A.080, as well as the adopted Countywide Planning Policies. The Packwood Subarea Plan is being completed in two phases. Phase 1 is the vision, goals and policies, including a Future Land Use Map. Phase 2 will be amendments to zoning designations and development regulations that implement Phase 1. Phase 1 will be completed in 2023 and Phase 2 in 2025. Map 1 shows the subarea boundary and Map 2 shows the extent of Downtown Packwood.

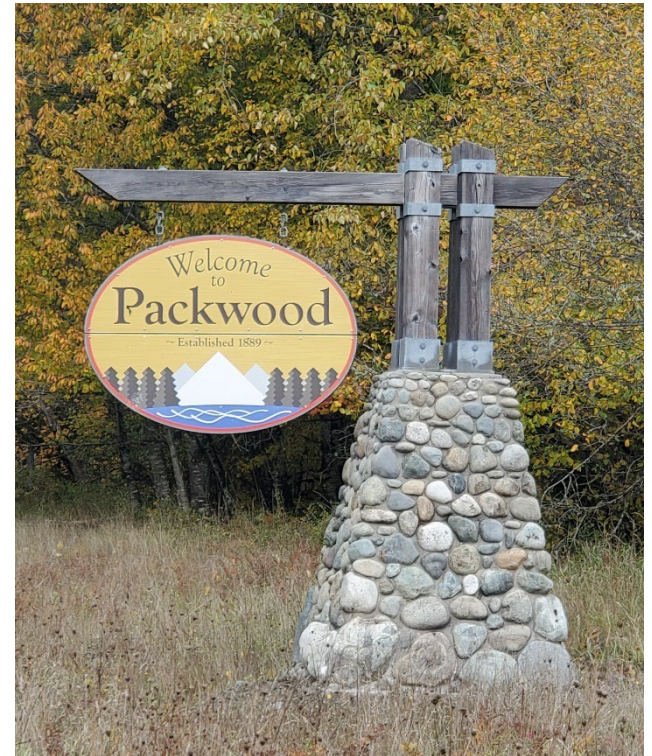
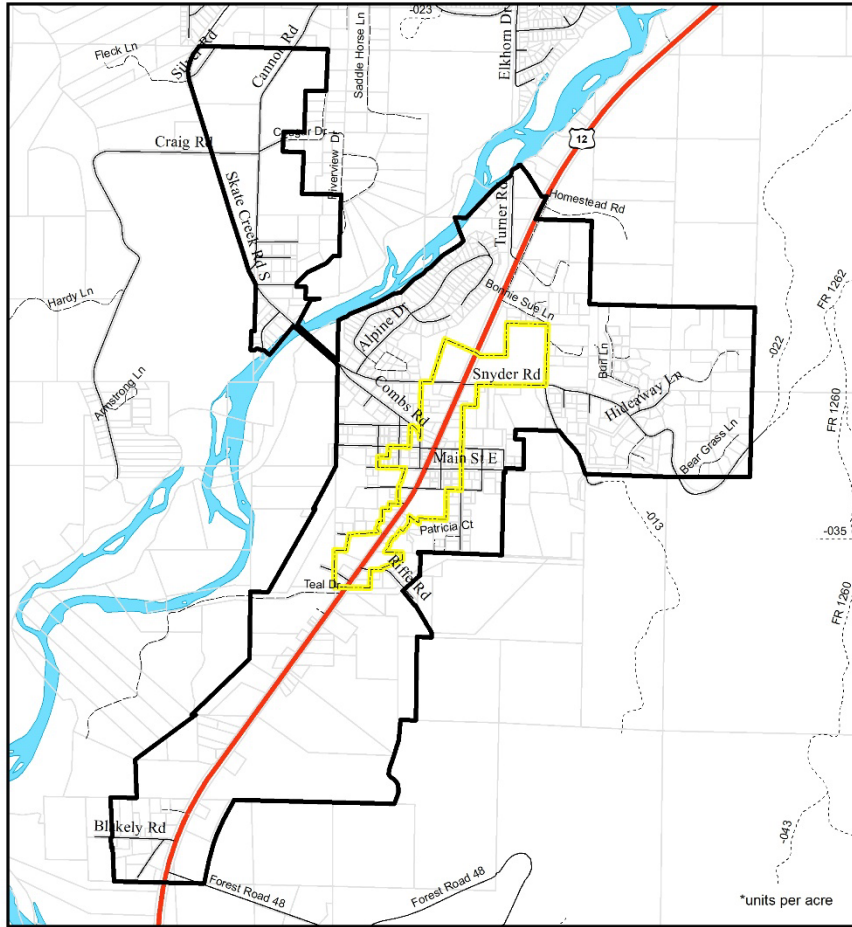


Photo: Mindy Brooks



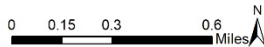
- The Packwood Plan**
- Subarea Boundary
  - Packwood Downtown
  - Highway 12
  - Roads
  - Parcels
- Cowlitz River



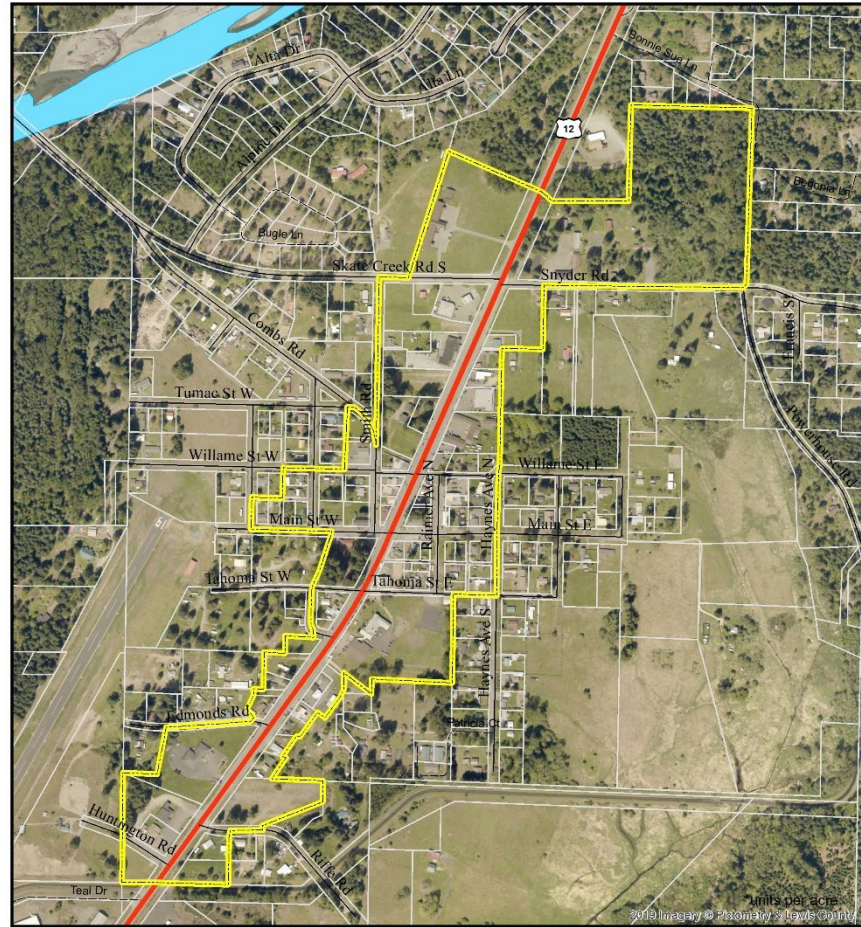
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Updated 11/09/2023

Planning Division, Community Development



Map 1: Packwood Subarea Boundary



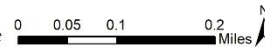
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Updated 07/28/2023

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Map 2: Downtown Packwood

## Why create a subarea plan for Packwood?

Between 1969 and 1976, as a result of the National Environmental Protection Act and the National Forest Management Act, forest management practices shifted the focus of the area from timber production to ecosystem management. The decline in harvests, increased mill mechanization, and foreign competition ultimately played a role in the closure of the Packwood Lumber Mill in November 1998. The Packwood community lost 220 jobs at the mill which resulted in the out-migration of a large number of younger working families. By the year 2000, the year-round population of the Packwood community was estimated at about 645 people and approximately half of the houses in the community were converted to either seasonal rentals or vacation homes. With the loss of population came the closure of the Packwood Elementary School, the pharmacy, and two restaurants. The Packwood Ranger Station permanently closed in 2003. The estimated number of full time residents in 2010 was down to 342.

Since the 2010, Packwood has seen an increase in the tourism industry. Between 2019 and 2022 the Packwood Visitor Center saw a fourfold increase in attendance from 1,903 visitors to 8,113 visitors. Representatives of the Visitor Center believe only 1% of tourists come to the center, meaning the annual visitorship in Packwood may exceed 800,000 people. Mount Rainier National Park tracks traffic counts northbound on Highway 123, located 7 miles from Packwood. In 2019, there were 98,037 trips, increasing to 114,334 trips in 2021.

Tourism has improved the business climate in Packwood, but it has also caused a significant increase in property values. Between 2012 and 2022, Packwood saw a 300% increase in the sale price of houses. By 2022, there were 216 short term rentals and that number increased to 252 in 2023. The lack of affordable housing has a negative impact on residents and on businesses. Nikia Hernandez, former U.S. Forest Service Cowlitz Valley Ranger located in Randle, said "We typically try to hire 25-30 seasonal employees every summer. If we cannot find candidates who live within a commuting distance it is quite common for applicants to turn down a position if there is no affordable housing available to them. This has become more and more of an issue over the years and it is directly affecting our ability to fill positions." Kathleen Goyette, White Pass Ski Area, said "lack of affordable rental properties available seasonally is of great concern to us and to our current and prospective employees."



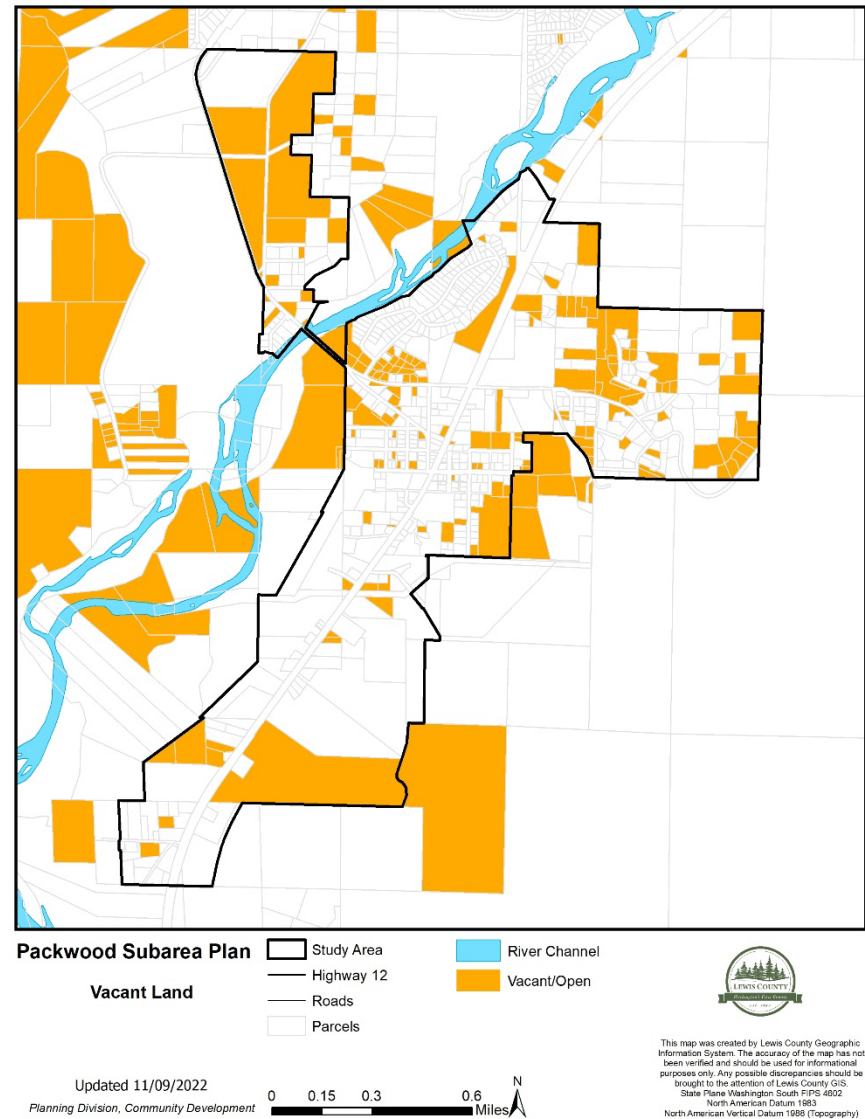
*White Pass Ski Area (Photo: Mindy Brooks)*



The existing zoning in Packwood, primarily Small Town Mixed Use, allows many new uses and development including: single family residential, accessory dwelling units, duplexes, sporting goods stores, restaurants, grocery stores, fuel stations, hotels/motels, RV parks, small event centers and other small businesses, as well as schools, doctor’s offices, churches, etc. With sewer, anticipated in 2026, multifamily residential would also be allowed in portions of downtown. There are 195 acres of vacant land in the subarea boundary currently zoned Small Town Mixed Use (Map 3) that could be developed with the above listed uses, bringing many more people and businesses to town. Without the subarea plan, this growth would occur largely without the community’s input.

The capacity for future development and the significant increase in tourism puts pressure on the transportation system. Highway 12 in Packwood is a barrier to community connectivity. Speed limits leading to Huntington Road in the south and Turner Road in the north are 55 mph and the speed limit within the study area is 35 mph. There are no traffic calming facilities (e.g., rumble strips, stop signs) on Highway 12 through Packwood. There is no designated parking or parking signs. There are no designated walking or bike paths. There is no accessibility for people who are not fully able-bodied. There is very limited lighting. The results of all of these factors are that people cannot easily and safely access both sides of the highway.

The intent of the subarea plan is to guide and manage growth and development over the next 20-years. The plan does not drive development, which is already occurring at a fast pace. The plan helps direct growth and development. The plan says, as development happens where the highest density of housing should go, what kind of housing is needed for residents and employees, where most commercial uses and businesses should go, what kind of uses are not desired, how to improve the transportation system and what infrastructure is necessary as growth occurs.



Map 3: Vacant Lands

## Public Engagement

The subarea plan vision, goals and policies were developed by the community of Packwood through public engagement, including a 35-member Community Advisory Committee that met monthly from January through December 2022, four public forums on housing-related topics, three community surveys provided online and at the Packwood Timberland Library, interviews with eleven businesses, and other community meetings and open house events. The primary themes that emerged from the engagement were protecting the small town feel of Packwood, need for affordable housing and good paying jobs, Highway 12 safety, and high quality educational opportunities. The full results of public engagement are found in Attachment A: Packwood Subarea Plan Public Participation. *(Note – Future engagement will include the public hearings process that allows for public comment to the Lewis County Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners.)*



April 2022 Packwood Housing Forum on Short Term Rentals (Photo: Mindy Brooks)



Information Table at the 2021 Holiday Craft Fair (Photo: Jeremy Brooks)

## 2: PACKWOOD HISTORY

Native American use of the Packwood area has been documented through a number of archaeological investigations. Demonstrated use of the area was found as early as 9,000 to 10,000 years ago (Mack et. al, 2010). Early occupants of the upper Cowlitz River Valley were highly mobile foraging people who likely did not build permanent shelters or settlements in the area. Approximately 2,500 to 4,000 years ago, adaptations shifted toward greater reliance on mass harvest and storage of key resources, particularly anadromous fish. At the same time, there was an increase in the use of more sedentary residences and the establishment of village settlements within the Cowlitz River Valley. The valley was abundant in wolverine, marmot, lynx, beaver, bear, deer and other fur-bearing animals. The Cowlitz River was the upper spawning area for coho, Chinook salmon, steelhead, grayling (mountain whitefish) and cutthroat trout. Huckleberries, three varieties, were an abundant food source, along with salal, wild strawberries, red elderberries, thimbleberries, salmonberries, trailing blackberries and Oregon grapes. Camas, lily bulbs, wild celery, wood sorrel and wild onion were also important food sources. Collectively these are known as the “first foods.”

In the early 1800’s, the area was home to a band of Táytnapam known to settlers as “Poniah’s band” after the name of the village headman. The village at Packwood was called *Chawachas* (Smith, 2006) and following Ichishkíin language conventions, the Táytnapam band would have called themselves the *Chawachas-íáma*. Táytnapam descendants are today members of both the Cowlitz Indian Tribe and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation.

The Cowlitz River Valley, from Packwood to Randle, was known by European settlers as “the Big Bottom,” shortened from Big Bullrush Bottom in reference to the bullrushes that grew along the river. In 1858-59, James Longmire and William Packwood led an expedition to find a low pass to connect the Puget Sound with the Oregon Trail. They were led by guides from the Nisqually Tribe. On an exploration in 1861, they descended Skate Creek with government engineer W.W. DeLacy and five Nisqually Indian packers and found a native village on the banks of the Cowlitz River (*Pioneer and Democrat*, 1861). Although a pass was not established, significant coal beds were found south and east of the Tatoosh Mountain Range that piqued further exploration.



Jim Yoker, 1890, State Library Photograph Collection, 1851-1990, Washington State Archives, Digital Archives, <http://www.digitalarchives.wa.gov>, data accessed 11/09/22

In the spring of 1882, William Joerk (also spelled York), a German merchant, was documented as the Big Bottom's first white settler. By the time Joerk reached the Big Bottom, disease and outmigration significantly decreased the number of native peoples. Of the hundreds of natives who were documented to have trapped for the Hudson's Bay Company in 1833, York found only a few families that remained including those of George Washington Spearcheachen, Columbus Kiona, Jim Yoke (or the Yokechenot family) and the Santanas family (Roblin, 1919). In 1883, Joerk settled near the prairie and spent a lifetime grubbing out the tough maple forest. (The site became the Evan Blankenship cattle ranch and then the Victor Khvoroff ranch.)

The Northern Pacific Railroad scouted the area between 1867 and 1890; and the North Coast Railroad scouted from 1905 to 1909. But no railroad was built. In 1893, the first money was appropriated for a road to be built from west Lewis County to Randle. Two years later, the road was continued to Sulfur Springs at the "far end" of Lewis (near what is now called Packwood). Also in 1893, the first school was started near the junction of State Route 410 and Vance Road and the first school teacher was Mary Siler.

In 1914, the U.S. government opened more than 23,000 acres of Rainier National Forest for settlement. The area included what today are housing developments around Packwood such as Goat Rocks, High Valley Park, Packwood Heights, Skate Creek Terrace, Skyline and Timberline Village. Many new settlers came into the area at that time. It was not until the 1930s, when a lumber sawmill was opened in Packwood, that commercial logging began to develop in the area and there was a shift in the County's economic with emphasis toward forest products and full-time local jobs. The first ranger station in the Packwood area was established in 1908, in a cabin on the former Ed Dixon homestead (Cannon Road area). In 1928, the U.S. Forest Service leased property and structures were built in 1928 and 1929 for the Packwood Ranger Station.



*1914 Lewis Hotel (now Hotel Packwood), courtesy of White Pass Country Museum*

The Great Depression impacted the people of Lewis County and the small community of Packwood. The Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) administration established Camp Packwood (F-33) within the community of Packwood in 1933. The camp was located on private land about 800 feet southwest of the Packwood Ranger Station. An inspection report from 1935 indicates 212 men worked for the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Company here (Bowen 1935).

Emphasis of forest management in the 1930s was fire protection. To facilitate communication for fire suppression, 116 miles of telephone lines connected the Packwood Ranger Station to surrounding lookouts and guard stations. Access throughout the district included 411 miles of trails and 26 miles of roads. Also in the 1930, recreational opportunities increased including development of the La Wis Wis Campground, a resort at Packwood Lake, and smaller campgrounds at Johnson Creek, Coal Creek, Soda Springs and Chambers Lake. Construction of the Cascade Crest Trail through Goat Rocks was completed in 1937.



*Packwood CCC Camp, c1938, Squires, courtesy of White Pass Country Museum*



*1944 Downtown Packwood, courtesy of White Pass Country Museum*

The road to Packwood, State Route 410, and was added to the state highway system in 1926. In 1931, the road was added to the Washington State highway system, although it did not cross the Cascade Mountains until 1951 with the opening of White Pass. Federal and state appropriations and completion of the highway allowed for more population growth near Packwood. In 1953, White Pass Ski Area opened and became an important recreational draw to the Packwood area. In 1964, the Packwood Lake Hydroelectric Project was built and included a drop structure with a pipeline to transmit water to a power generating facility in Packwood, which is still in operation today.

The emphasis on timber production within the national forest continued through the 1950's. Local sawmills, including the Packwood Lumber Company mill in Packwood, became more dependent upon a regular supply of logs through federal timber sales. Between 1969 and 1976, as a result of the National Environmental Protection Act and the National Forest Management Act, forest management practices again shifted the focus of the area from timber production to ecosystem management. However, in the late 1980's the district saw its highest volume of timber sales; 700 million board feet in 1990. Sales declined dramatically after that triggered by political factors and another shift in emphasis towards ecosystem restoration. The most publicized of these was the listing of the northern spotted owl as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1990. Timber harvests were reduced to pre-WWII levels by 1995.



*Packwood Lumber Mill, courtesy of White Pass Country Museum*

The reduction in the supply of Forest Service timber led to a 50 percent decrease in overall timber harvests within Lewis County between 1988 and 1996 (Tobe 2002). This decline in harvest, increased mill mechanization, and foreign competition ultimately played a role in the closure of the Packwood Lumber Mill in November 1998. The Packwood community lost 220 jobs at the mill and resulted in the out-migration of a large number of younger working families. By the year 2000, the year-round population of the Packwood community was estimated at about 645 people; approximately half of the houses in the community were either seasonal rentals or vacation homes. With the loss of population came the closure of the Packwood Elementary School, the pharmacy and two restaurants. The Packwood Ranger Station permanently closed in 2003. The estimated number of full time residents in 2010 was down to 342.

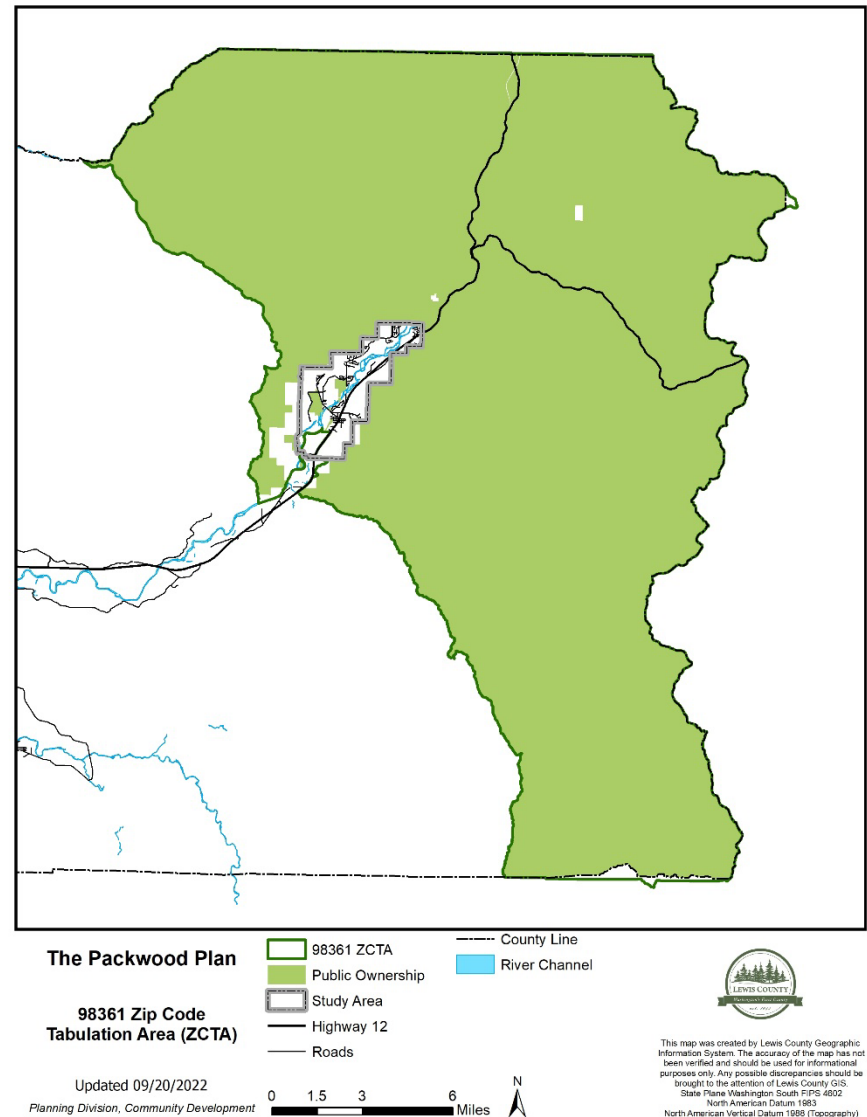
### 3: EXISTING CONDITIONS

The existing conditions were evaluated for a study area larger than the proposed subarea plan boundary (see Attachment B: Existing Conditions Report for more information.)

#### Population

Packwood is not an incorporated city and does not have an allocated population. The 2020 U.S. census documented 1,073 people who reside permanently within the standardized census zip code tabulation area (ZCTA) 98361 boundary. The 98361 ZCTA boundary includes the Packwood study area and the surrounding national forests, parks and wildlife areas (Map 4). It is assumed there are no full time residents living in the national public lands; therefore, the population is based almost entirely within the Packwood study area.

Between 2010 and 2020 the population of unincorporated Lewis County grew by 10%. Countywide growth appears to have increased rapidly in pace after 2020. Development permits issued for residential development (single family, manufactured homes and accessory dwelling units) were 292 in 2019 and 370 in 2022, a 27% growth rate. The Washington State Office of Financial Management records show that Packwood and immediately adjacent rural areas have consistently ranked highly in development in Lewis County for more than ten years, behind the largest urban areas around Centralia and Chehalis, but growing faster than smaller incorporated areas like Mossyrock or the urban growth area in Onalaska. It is anticipated that the growth rate for Packwood from 2022 to 2030 will remain high at 25% and will then level off to 10% growth between 2030 and 2045. The Lewis County Board of County Commissioners allocated a 2045 population of 1,200 people to Packwood (Ordinance 1346). The majority of the growth is anticipated to occur in the Packwood Subarea Plan boundary.



Map 4: 98361 ZCTA Boundary and Public Ownership

## Existing Zoning & Land Use

The study area includes all of the “limited areas of more intense rural development” (LAMIRDs) in the Packwood vicinity, as shown in Map 5. There are no agricultural resource lands or forest resource lands within the study area. Lewis County Code (LCC) Chapter 17.42 provides the list of allowed uses in each zone. Existing land uses within the study area are shown in Map 6. It is important to understand that existing uses may not match the allowed use in LCC 17.42 because some existing uses predate the zoning code regulations. Those uses are allowed to persist in their current development footprint and are referred to as a “legal nonconforming use.”

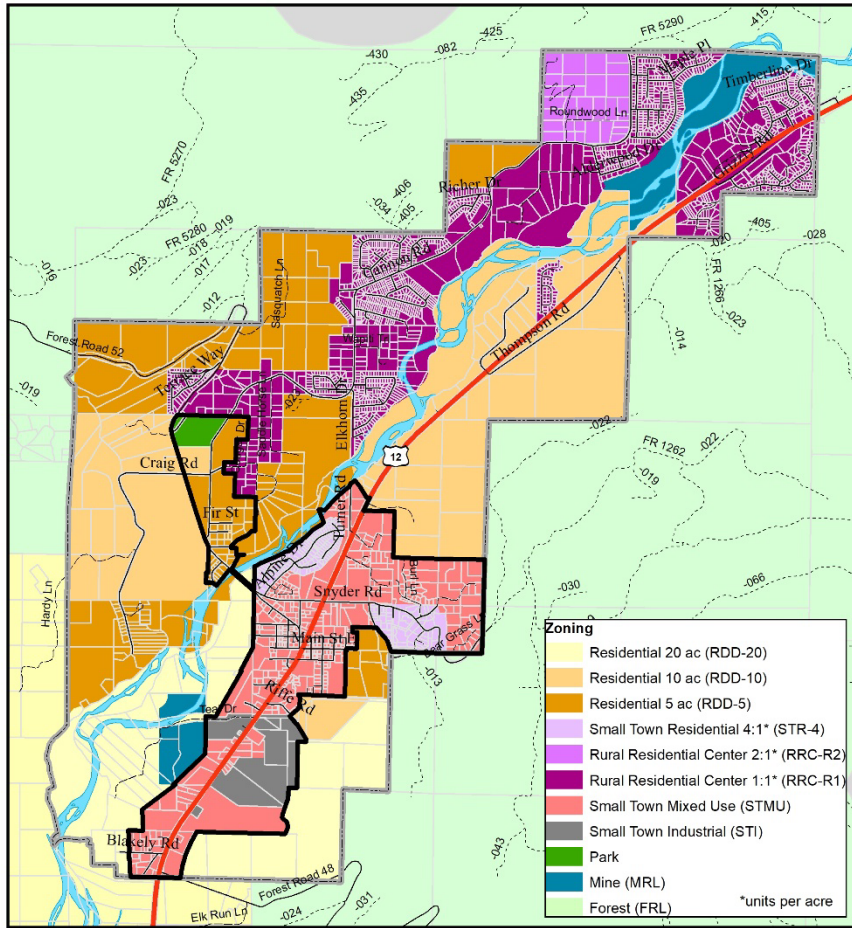
In the study area there are nine Type I LAMIRDS, divided into five use types, shown in Table 1. Type I LAMIRDs have boundaries that were adopted based on development patterns in 1995 and those boundaries cannot change unless an error was made in the original mapping. However, new development, including land divisions and redevelopment, within the LAMIRD boundaries are allowed. In the study area, there are 360 vacant parcels in the LAMIRDs, equaling 459.5 acres, which can be developed with residential or commercial uses. This means there is significant capacity for new growth and development based on the existing zoning designations and development regulations. Growth within the study area, even when located outside the Packwood Subarea Plan boundary, will have an impact on property values, economic development and traffic within the plan boundary.

**Table 1: Packwood LAMIRDs**

Zone	Title	Allowed Density	Parcel Count	Total Acres	Vacant Parcels	Vacant Acres
RRC-R1	Rural Residential Center 1	1 unit / 1 acre	1,660	1,143	213	177
RRC-R2	Rural Residential Center 2	1 unit / 2 acre	31	158	9	53
STR-4	Small Town Residential 4	4 units / 1 acre	193	134	25	33
STMU	Small Town Mixed Use	N/A	423	704	111	195
STI	Small Town Industrial	N/A	16	122	2	1.5

The Packwood Subarea Plan boundary includes the areas zoned STMU and STI, the Lewis County Water Sewer District 3 service area (see Map 8), and a future development area west of the Cowlitz River. The STMU zone does not have a minimum allowed density and the density of development is determined by health code and available utilities. If there are both public water and sewer, then the minimum lot size is 6,000 square feet. However, that does not clarify the density of development that is allowed on each site. Allowed uses in existing STMU zoned areas include single family residential, accessory dwelling units, duplexes, sporting goods stores, restaurants, grocery stores, fuel stations, hotels/motels, RV parks, small event centers and other small businesses, as well as schools, doctor’s office, churches, etc. With sewer, multifamily residential would also be allowed. There are 195 acres of vacant land in the Packwood Subarea boundary that is currently zoned for STMU and could be developed with the above listed uses.





**Packwood Subarea Plan**

- Study Area
- Subarea Boundary
- Highway 12
- Roads
- Parcels
- River Channel

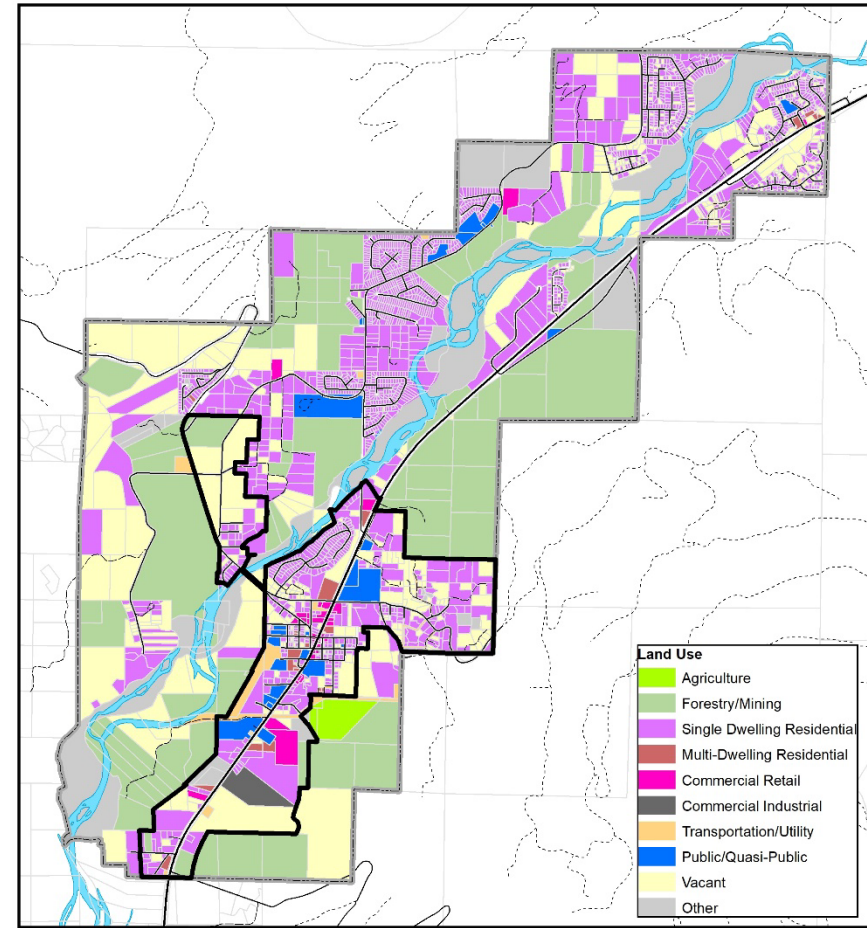
**Existing Zoning**

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0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

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Map 5: Existing Zoning Designations



**Packwood Subarea Plan**

- Study Area
- Subarea Boundary
- Highway 12
- Roads
- Parcels
- River Channel

**Generalized Existing Land Use**

Updated 11/09/23  
Planning Division, Community Development

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

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Map 6: Existing Generalized Land Use

## Housing

Within the study area, there are 1,868 single dwelling residential parcels. The following is a summary of some of the different housing types in Packwood (see also Map 6). The numbers are not additive and there may be overlap or gaps.

- 145 parcels are owner occupied
- 216 parcels are short term rentals
- 613 parcels are personal vacation homes
- 894 parcels are other residential uses without a specified type (e.g., vacation homes, short term rentals, etc.)

There are 444 parcels of undivided, vacant residential land within the study area, which could be developed in the future.

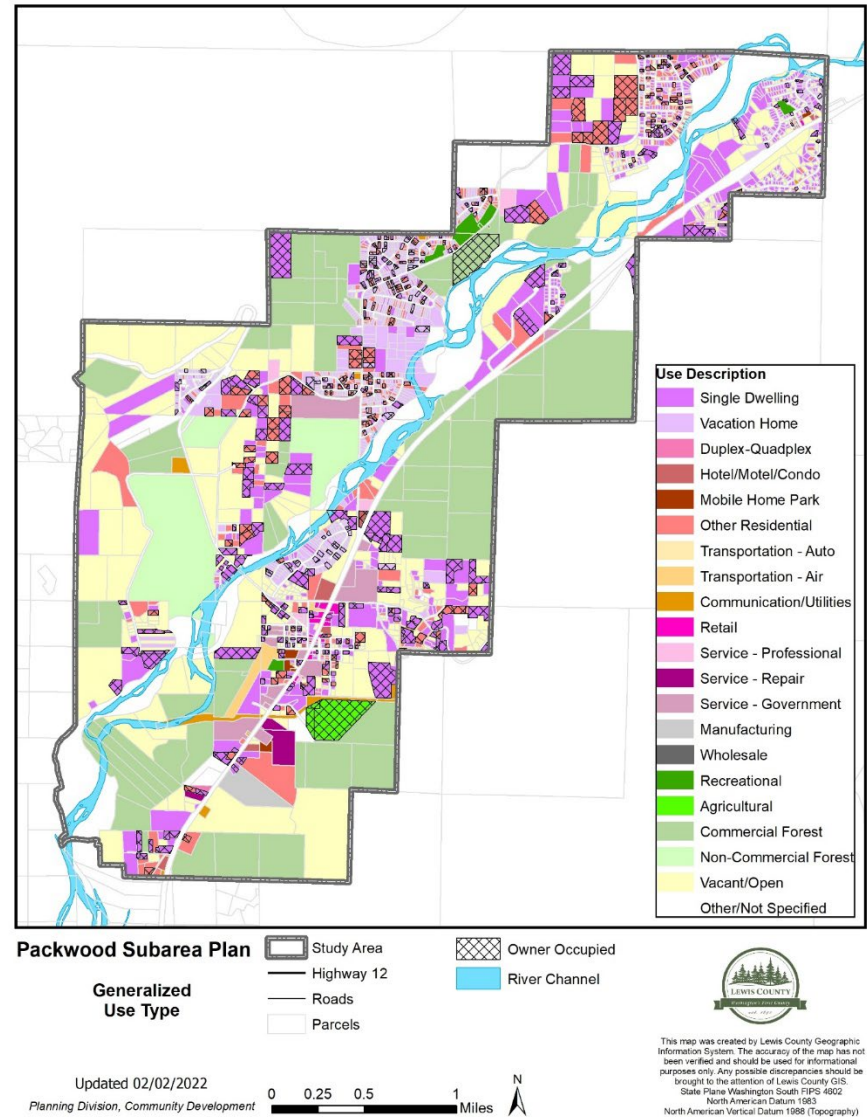
Only 8% of the housing in Packwood is owner-occupied (Map 7). Another 33% are vacation homes, which are assumed to not be rented out as short term rentals. Based on a study by Granicus, in 2023 there were 252 short term rentals in the Packwood study area, which is 14% of the housing. It is interesting to note that nearly half of all the short term rentals in Lewis County are located in Packwood.

There is not specific data for Packwood about the type and cost of housing. The following information is for Lewis County as a whole. The source is the *Berk Housing Study for Lewis County*, <https://lewiscountywa.gov/offices/commissioners/bocc-news/housing-summit/>. In Lewis County, 70% of the housing stock is single family residential (SFR) and the average sale price of a SFR dwelling has increased from roughly \$150,000 in 2012 to over \$350,000 in 2021. The remaining housing stock includes mobile homes (17%), multi-dwelling residential (13%) and other (0.5%), which includes RV and boat. Income levels have also increased in Lewis County; however, the median household income in 2019 was \$58,911, which is considerably less than the state median income of \$78,687. In addition, 24% of the county's population has a *very low* or *extreme low* income (<50% of Median Family Income).

Housing supply in Lewis County is also low. Between 2012 and 2021, there was a 69% decrease in the supply of homes for sale. In June 2021, the county had only a one month supply of housing. Typically, a region needs at least a four month supply to moderate housing cost increases. Rental unit vacancy is also low at 4.5%.

In Map 7, owner occupied is estimated assuming the following:

1. If the site address and the mailing address are the same, then it is assumed that the owner resides on the lot.
2. If the site address and the mailing address are different, but the cities are the same, it is assumed that the owner resides within Packwood. These were individually reviewed as follows:
  - a. If the owner is a business enterprise, then it is assumed the owner does not reside on the property. This may result in an underestimation of owner occupancy.
  - b. If the owner owns one lot and the cities match, then it is assumed the owner resides on the property.
  - c. If the owner owns more than one lot and one of the lot's site address and mailing address are the same, then it is assumed the owner resides on this lot and the other lots are not owner occupied.
  - d. If the owner owns more than one lot and none of the lots' site addresses and mailing addresses are the same, each lot was reviewed to determine if any are vacant. If any have no dwelling, it is assumed the owner does not reside on that lot.
  - e. If the owner owns more than one lots and none of the lots' site addresses and mailing addresses are the same, and none of the lots are vacant, then it cannot be assumed which lot the owner resides on. All of the non-vacant lots are marked as owner occupied. This may result in an overestimation of owner occupancy.



Map 7: Owner Occupied Residential Lots

Affordable housing means a person spends no more than 30% of their monthly income on housing. A person making minimum wage, \$14.49 per hour (2022), can afford to pay \$695 per month on housing. A person making \$47,752 per year (2020 median per capita income) can afford to pay \$1,194 per month on housing. The average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Washington is \$1,229. At the time of this report, there were no long-term rentals available in Packwood. The average listing price for a single family house in Packwood is \$420,000. *Sources: US Census; realtor.com.* Multiple employers in Packwood and the surrounding area have reported that lack of affordable housing, especially long-term and season rental, is a primary reason for prospective employees turning down employment.

Coupling income levels and housing availability, Lewis County residents are facing an increasing household cost burden. The sales prices of single family homes are increasing faster than local income levels. In addition, 48% of renter households pay more than 30% their income on housing and 24% pay more than 50% on housing costs. This means Lewis County residents increasingly cannot afford housing.

Unsheltered or "literal" homelessness is defined as lacking a fixed nighttime residence, living outside or in a shelter not intended for human habitation (like a vehicle, barn, or garage), or staying in an emergency shelter. A broader category of "unstably housed" includes those who are "couch surfing," e.g. temporarily staying with friends or family, or living in transitional housing. The Washington State Department of Commerce tracks both literal homelessness and unstable housing at the county level amongst people accessing programs such as Medicaid, TANF (welfare), and housing-related services. Based on this data, there were about 2,840 households in Lewis County that were either homeless or unstably housed as of January 2023. Data specific to the Packwood study area is not available.

A more localized source of data on homelessness is the White Pass School District. Public K-12 schools track and provide services to students experiencing homelessness, using a definition that is similar to the state's definition of "unstably housed." Students, and their families, who are literally homeless and those who are unstably housed are counted as homeless by the public schools. Data from the White Pass School District indicates that 46 students, or 13% of the student population, experienced homelessness at some point during the 2021-2022 school year. This is a very high rate compared to the statewide average of 2.7% of all students experiencing homelessness during that school year. There is no shelter in East Lewis County, so it is likely those individuals and families experiencing homelessness are staying at a relative or friend's house or are living in an RV or trailer. There are no publicly subsidized multifamily rentals in Packwood or East Lewis County. There are also no services in Packwood to aid individuals and families in finding stable housing.

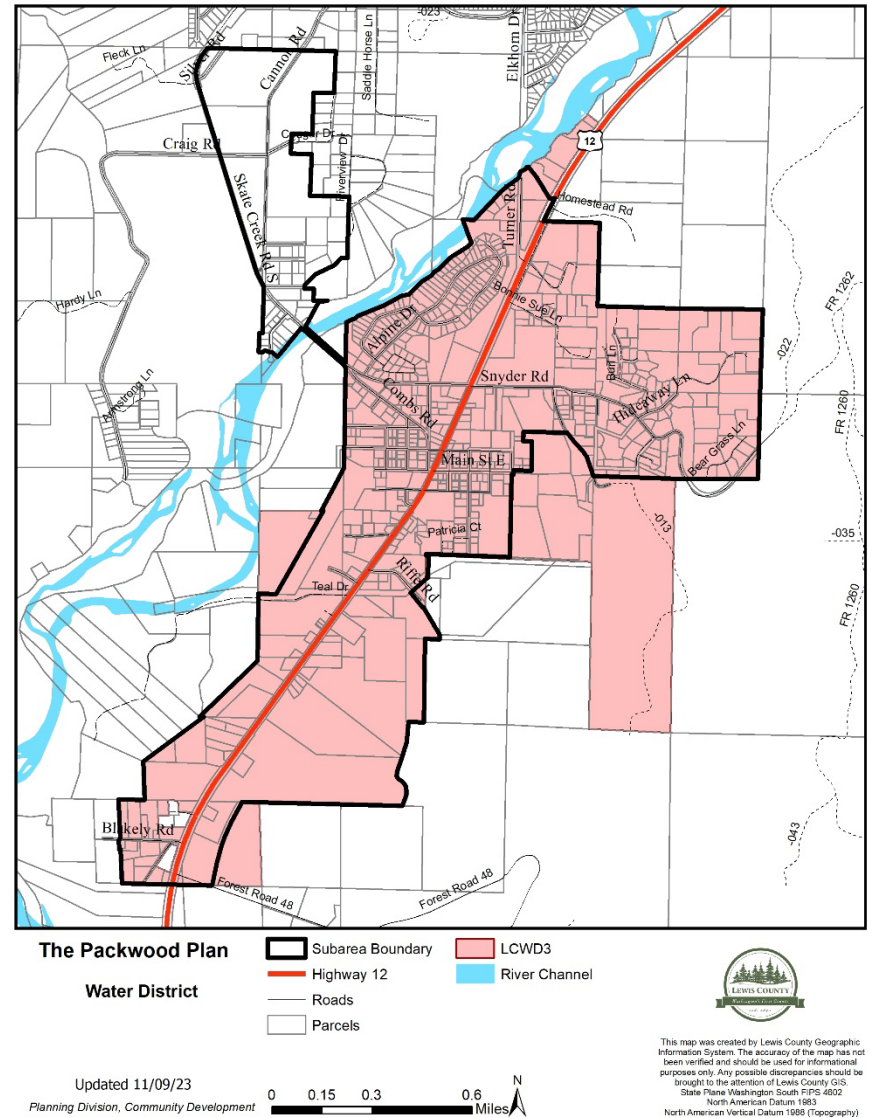
# Public Facilities

## Water

Packwood has two community wells drawing from an aquifer that is classified as unconfined and semi-confined and serves approximately 360 individual connections. As of December 2022, Lewis County Water Sewer District 3 (LCWSD3) could accommodate up to 229 additional single family residential connections or a mix of residential and commercial connections under the current system configuration and Water Rights. The system, including the wells, is owned and operated by LCWSD3. Map 8 shows the currently approved service area of LCWSD3, although not all properties in the service area are connected to the public water supply.

LCWSD3 relies on two wells that withdraw from an aquifer, which mimics the hydraulic gradient of the nearby Cowlitz River. The wells are established at 75 ft. depth. The water from the wells is pumped up to a reservoir located up Snyder Road and then gravity-fed back down to the individual connections. Some hookups are fed on the way up to the reservoir. Monitoring of the wells has never detected any fluctuation in the level of the aquifer, even during drought events. The district water is tested routinely and has never required permanent disinfection or other types of water quality treatment. If the threshold of connections is reached, LCWSD3 will likely need to add another reservoir and possibly an additional well.

Some properties located within the LCWSD3 service area rely on alternative water supplies including small public water systems and individual wells.



Map 8: Lewis County Water Sewer District 3

**Wastewater**

All existing development in Packwood is currently served by private on-site septic systems. Most of the systems are conventional gravity flow septic tanks and drain fields. A large number of inadequate septic systems in the Packwood community pose a health threat to the aquifer that provide domestic water for the area. Bacteria, virus and nitrate contaminates from these systems can cause serious health problems.

Most of the soils in the area are classified as "Type 1, gravelly, very gravelly, coarse sands, and extremely gravelly soil," which result in high levels of permeability. Since this type of soil is so permeable it provides a minimal amount of soil treatment to Downtown Packwood (Map 2), thus a large amount of wastewater is discharged to the ground over a small area. Many of the existing on-site systems in the downtown core were installed before 1991, when Lewis County Public Health & Social Services, Environmental Health Division, began to specify that these highly permeable soils fail to provide adequate treatment of sewage effluent prior to discharge to the groundwater.

In August 2022, Lewis County Public Works was provided an appropriation by the Washington State Legislature for design and construction of a public sewer system that will serve a portion of the Packwood Subarea although the exact service area was undecided when the Packwood Subarea Plan was adopted. The appropriation was largely based on the public health risk posed by the existing on-site septic systems. It is anticipated that construction of the municipal sewer treatment system will be completed in 2026 and will be operated by the LCWSD3.

**Stormwater**

Because Packwood is unincorporated, jurisdiction for stormwater regulation falls under LCC 15.45. Lewis County ensures compliance with LCC 15.45 through a permitting process when regulated development proposals, such as subdivisions or new and re-development, are reviewed to determine if the requirements are met. Maintenance of stormwater facilities, such as detention ponds, are the responsibility of the property owner. Generally, new and re-development must meet the state Department of Ecology's Stormwater Management Manual for drainage plans to reduce impacts of stormwater on receiving waters (e.g. streams and rivers).

**Fire and Life Safety**

The Packwood Fire District 10 (Fire District) has three stations located within the study area: Station #1 (12953 US Highway 12), Station #2 (483 Cannon Road) and Station #3 (234 Mountain View Drive, HVP 8/11). Station #1 on Highway 12 is the main station and houses two tenders, two ambulances, two brush vehicles, one engine and one rescue vehicle. Station #3 is located in High Valley and has an additional engine. Station #1 was dedicated in 2000 and was fully funded by 2015. Station #2 has the old Mack and air system.

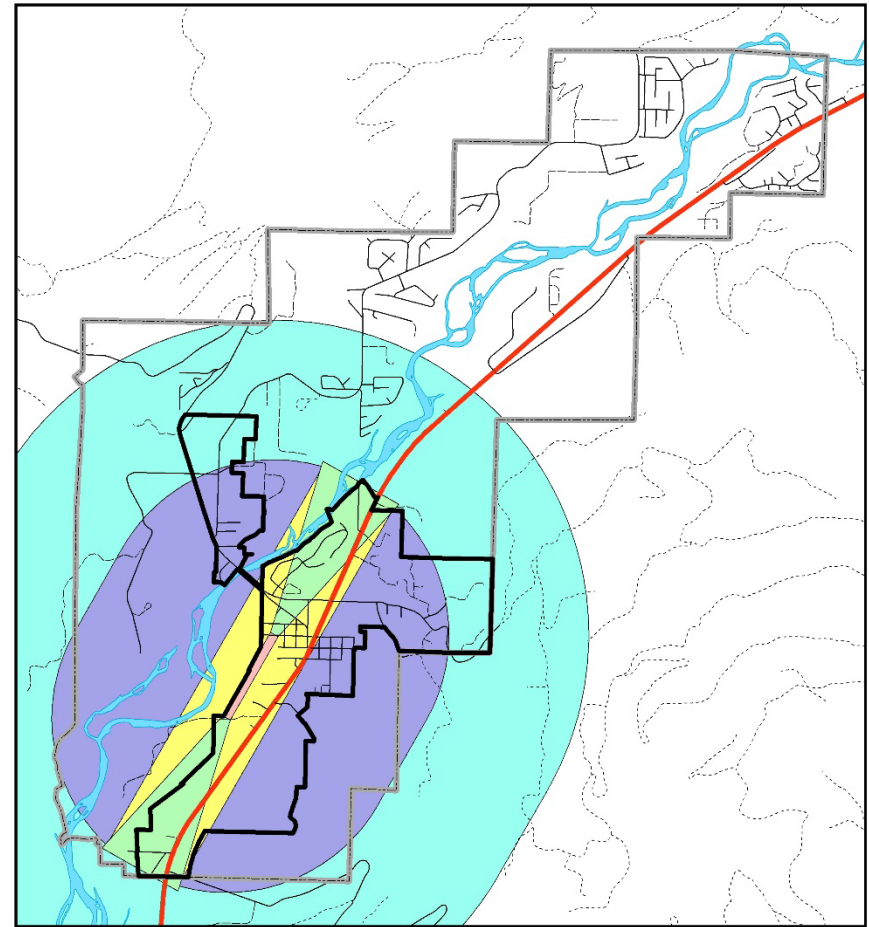
The service area is 320 square miles including part of Skate Creek Road and Highway 12 from White Pass to Mile Post 120. The Fire District has mutual aid agreements with all of Lewis County for both emergency services (EMS) and fire, as well as a mutual aid agreement with the Department of Natural Resources for wildland fires. The Fire District works with the Forest Service to address fires if needed and until the Forest Service is able to respond. The Fire District also responds to Mount Rainier National Park for both EMS and fire. Advance Life Support

and airlift helicopters can fly out of the Packwood Airport, located behind Station #1. EMS attends to roughly 275 calls per year. Combined structure and woodland fires make up approximately 25 calls per year. The Fire District is run by a five-member elected commission, one chief and one secretary. The Fire District has 15 volunteers with two EMTs, three AEMTs, and one EMR. All volunteers do both EMS and firefighting. Response time is 10 to 12 minutes.

**Transportation**

Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) owns and maintains Highway 12, which runs through the center of the Packwood Subarea. Along with traffic, the right-of-way also provides area for utilities. Lewis County maintains 29 miles of roadway in the study area. The majority of the roads (27 miles in the larger study area) are rural local access roads and the remaining 2 miles are rural major collector. Roughly 25 of those miles are bituminous surface treatment (BST), 4 miles are hot mix asphalt (HMA) and less than 1 mile is gravel surface. In addition, there is an agreement between Lewis County and U.S. Forest Service for the county to maintain portions of Forest Service Roads No. 1260 (Snyder Road), No. 1261 (Powerhouse Road) and No. 1268 (Coal Creek Road).

The Packwood Airport is 36 acres and is located at 132 Main Street W. The landing strip extends from Tail Race stream to Willame Street W. In 2000, 3,200 visitors arrived via the airport. That resulted in \$966,179 in direct economic output, which includes the wages of 17 jobs associated with the airport (Washington State Department of Transportation, Aviation Division, Packwood Airport report). In 2021, the airport had 5,300 aircraft operations; the annual range is 3,200 to 8,500 operations. There is an airport obstruction zone around the landing strip (Map 9). The height of structures within this area is limited. LCC 17.80 states the exact distances and maximum height requirements. WSDOT considers residential development near airports to be an incompatible use.



**The Packwood Plan**

- Subarea Boundary
- Study Area
- Highway 12
- Roads
- Cowlitz River

**Airport Obstruction Zones**

- Primary Surface
- Visual Approach
- Horizontal
- Transitional
- Conical

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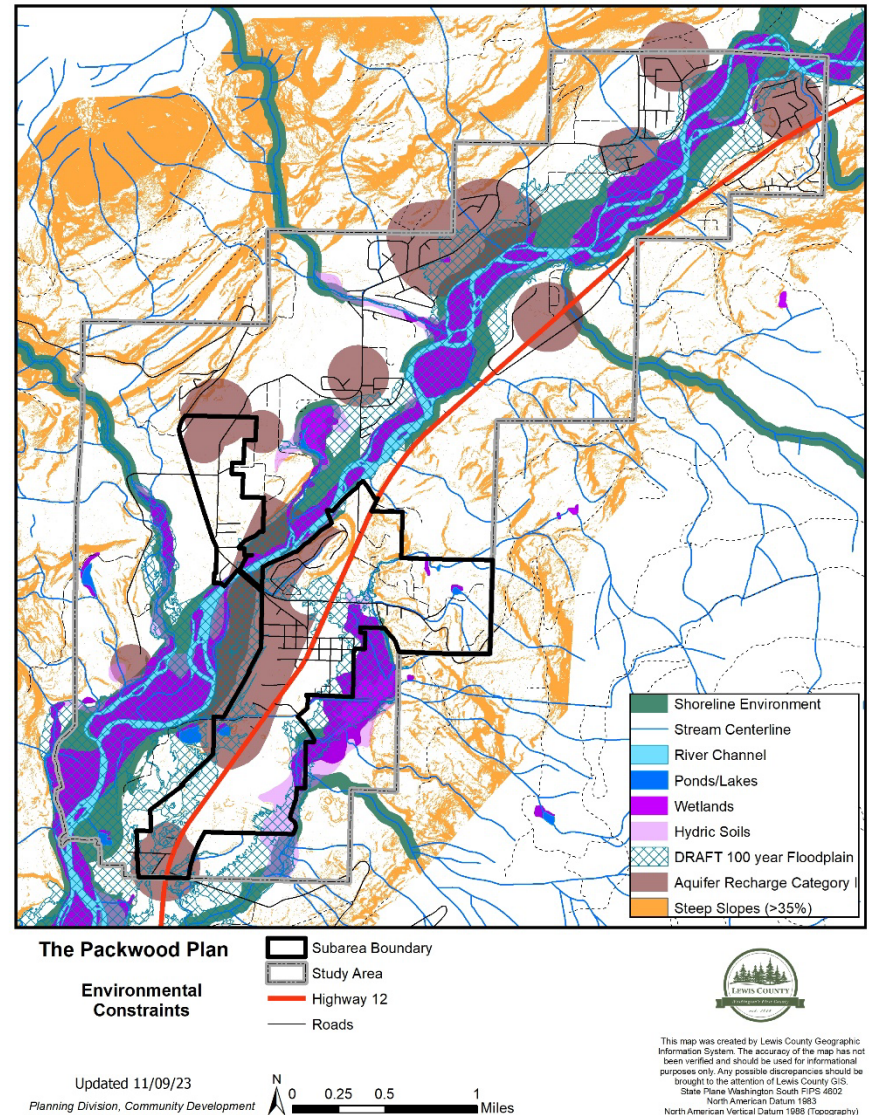
Map 9: Packwood Airport Obstruction Zones

## Environmental Constraints

Packwood has many environmental resources. The Cowlitz River flows through the middle of the subarea and provides habitat for anadromous salmonids, Mountain White Fish, American Bald Eagle, Osprey and beaver. Neighborhoods are nestled in large stands of cedar, Douglas fir and big leaf maple that provide habitat for a wide diversity of mammals, birds and amphibians. Elk frequently graze in large open areas, including surrounding farm lands. These resources are a primary reason people live and visit Packwood and are integral to the community’s character.

The environmental resources also create constraints (Map 10) for future development and growth. The Cowlitz River is located near the water’s source on Mount Rainier and above any flow controls. The river channel migrates during fall and spring high water events, resulting in natural bank erosion and sediment deposits. During large flood events, the river can have devastating impacts on homes and businesses built in the floodplain. Streams throughout the subarea and wetlands in the relatively flat valley manage water during the winter, but can also flood and impact structures. Critical aquifer recharge areas are important to protecting wells for potable water. In addition, steep slopes, particularly around the edges of Packwood, are a landslide hazard.

Preserving the environmental resources and reducing the impacts of natural hazards that can result in damage to property and infrastructure is important to creating a sustainable future for Packwood.



Map 10: Packwood Environmental Constraints



## 4: VISION, GOALS AND POLICIES

**Vision – Packwood is a vibrant small town that embraces its history, encourages unique local businesses, provides a diversity of affordable housing options, supports existing and new residents, preserves the natural environment, encourages tourism and promotes community events.**

The goals and policies, maps and illustrations on the following pages clarify this vision. Phase 2 will implement the vision, goals and policies through new and updated zoning designations and development regulations.



*Packwood Farmer's Market at the Packwood Timberland Library Park in June 2022 (Photo: Mindy Brooks)*

## Community

### Community Goal 1 – Support families living, working and playing in town.

Families are an important part of any town. Families support the local economy by working in town and purchasing goods and services. Families also invest in social capital including sports and clubs. Since the 1990's, Packwood has lost families due to the closure of the mill, ranger station and elementary school in town. To support families moving back to and staying in Packwood, there needs to be educational opportunities including high quality schools and libraries, community spaces for recreation and gathering, youth-oriented activities, employment that pays a living wage and affordable housing options. In addition, families need safe walking and biking paths to and through the community.



*Drawing by Kim Pawlawski*

### Policies

CM1.1: Support White Pass School District and Timberland Regional Libraries to provide high quality educational opportunities.

CM1.2: Increase local childcare options.

CM1.3: Preserve public open spaces and enhance with youth-oriented facilities including but not limited to play structures and ball fields.

CM1.4: Encourage indoor family-oriented facilities including but not limited to a gym, movie theater and arcade.

CM1.5: Increase the diversity of services including but not limited to medical, dental, veterinarian, barber and banking.

CM1.6: Support new affordable retail options that provide clothing, shoes, books, crafts, etc.

CM1.7: Preserve the rural atmosphere by limiting artificial noise and light.

### Community Goal 2 – Encourage services and facilities that allow residents to age in place.

People have longer, healthier and fuller lives when they are able to live in a community that has well established social networks including family, friends, church, community center, etc. As we age, the types of services and facilities that are needed changes. The ability to access services and facilities can become difficult due to mobility issues.

### Policies

CM2.1: Work with partners, such as the Economic Alliance and East County Chamber of Commerce, to bring new services including medical, physical therapy, dental, pharmacy and in-home health care.

CM2.2: Encourage Veterans Affairs facilities and services to be located in Packwood.

CM2.3: Enhance social connections by promoting use of community buildings and spaces for gatherings and events.

CM2.4: Support expanded services provided by the Packwood Senior Center.

## Land Use

### **Land Use Goal 1 – Preserve the small town uniqueness and charm of Packwood.**

Packwood is a small town with history rooted in the timber industry. Historic buildings like the Historic Hotel Packwood, White Pass Museum (formerly an elementary school) and Packwood Station (formerly Packwood Ranger Station), exemplify the town's history. The relatively small size of existing buildings and space between each building aides in a "small town" feel. There are many locally owned small businesses that provide unique and charming products and services.

#### **Policies**

LU1.1: Support locally owned small-scale businesses not found anywhere else in Washington.

LU1.2: Preserve and enhance historic buildings and sites.

LU1.3: Create design guidelines for new buildings that face Highway 12, Main Street or Willame Street in Downtown Packwood to ensure a cohesive look and size (see Design Guidelines subsection).

LU1.4: Establish side setbacks to maintain space between buildings in Downtown Packwood.

### **Land Use Goal 2 – Contain higher density development near Downtown Packwood and prevent sprawl.**

Packwood is located in the Upper Cowlitz River Valley and is surrounded by national forests, wildlife areas and parks. This in-and-of-itself helps to contain future development. However, there are also large lots (greater than 5 acres) and small agricultural operations located between the forests and the town that create the rural setting for Packwood. These rural areas are important to the residents, business owners and tourists and should be protected from future higher density development.

#### **Policies**

LU2.1: Encourage mixed use commercial and multifamily residential development in Downtown Packwood.

LU2.2: Encourage higher density residential development near Downtown Packwood.

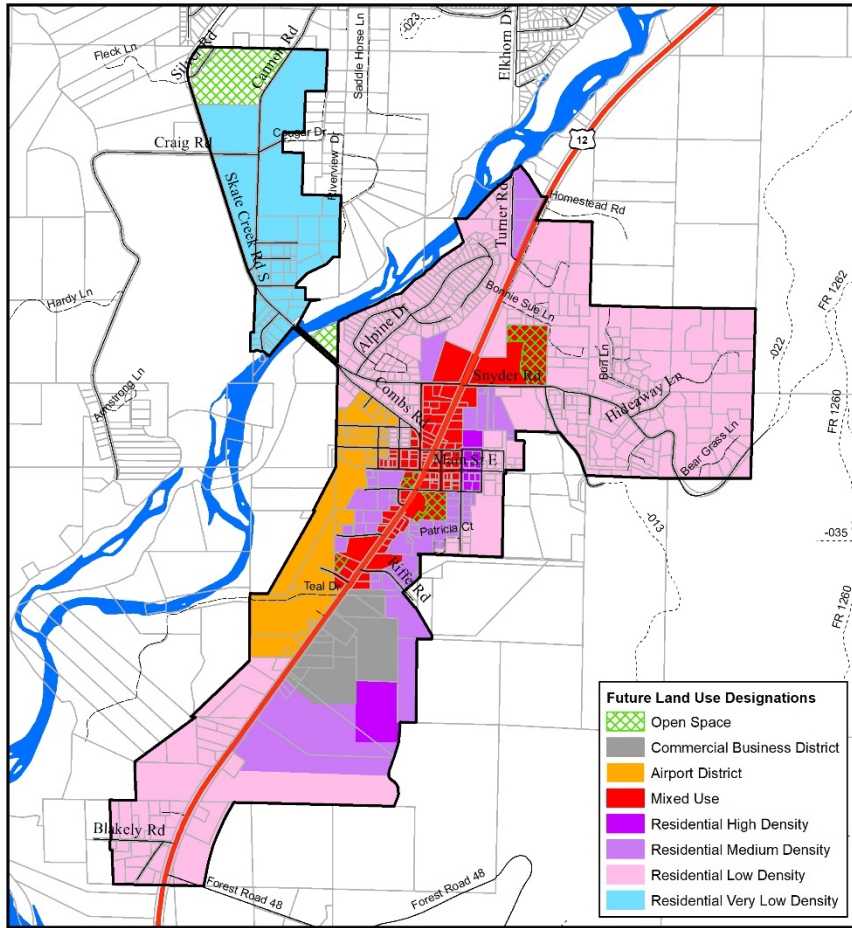
LU2.3: Support redevelopment of the historic mill site with commercial and residential uses.

LU2.4: Reduce incompatible land uses surrounding the Packwood Airport.

LU2.5: Develop new residential uses west of the Franklin Bridge (aka Skate Creek Bridge) that has a similar housing density as the residential developments of High Valley.

LU2.6: Maintain rural density of development surrounding the subarea plan boundary.

<b>Table 2: Future Land Use Designations</b>		
<b>Designation</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Description</b>
Open Space	OS	The focus of these areas is recreation for the general public. Areas should be programmed for community gathering and outdoor play. Play structures, sports fields and courts, picnic tables, benches, gazebos and walking trails are encouraged. Streams, wetlands, trees and native vegetation should be protected and enhanced.
Commercial Business District	CBZ	The focus of these areas is commercial, office space and small scale manufacturing uses. Larger commercial buildings, 10,000 to 20,000 sq. ft., may be located here. Highest density residential uses, 18-30 units per acre, should be allowed if buffered from manufacturing uses. Connectivity and pedestrian access should be prioritized. New residential single family development should be discouraged.
Airport District	AX	This area includes the Packwood Airport and supporting lands. The focus is commercial and small scale manufacturing. Larger commercial buildings, 10,000 to 20,000 sq. ft., may be located here. Very low density single family residential uses should be allowed on larger lots. Duplexes, ADUs and multifamily residential should be prohibited. Lots sizes should be one (1) acre or larger in size.
Mixed Use	MU	The focus of these areas is small scale (<10,000 sq. ft.) commercial and highest density residential uses, 18-30 units per acre. Lots facing Highway 12 should include ground floor commercial or office space and second story apartments or condos, with entrances facing Highway 12 and surface parking placed behind buildings to increase pedestrian access. Connectivity and pedestrian safety should be prioritized. Space between buildings is encouraged and building heights capped to preserve small town feel and views of Mount Rainier, Tatoosh Wilderness and Goat Rocks Wilderness. New residential single family development should be discouraged.
Residential High Density	RH	High density residential uses, 10-16 units per acre, should be located near Downtown Packwood and the Commercial Business District. Apartments and condos should be in a courtyard style around a common open space. Row houses, fourplexes, triplexes and duplexes should be encouraged. Dormitories or hostels should also be encouraged. Commercial uses should be allowed. Building heights should be capped to preserve views of Mount Rainier, Tatoosh Wilderness and Goat Rocks Wilderness.
Residential Medium Density	RM	Medium density residential uses, 6-10 units per acre, should be located in these areas. Rowhouses, fourplexes, triplexes, duplexes and ADUs, as well as tiny home villages should be allowed. Single family residential uses should also be allowed. Institutional uses (e.g., churches, libraries, schools) and home-based commercial uses should be allowed. Lot sizes should range from 5,000 to 7,500 sq. ft.
Residential Low Density	RL	The focus of these areas is traditional single family residential uses at 4-6 units per acre. Duplexes and ADUs should be encouraged to increase affordable housing options. Clustered tiny home villages should also be allowed. Institutional uses (e.g., churches, libraries, schools) and home-based commercial uses should be allowed. Lot sizes should range from 7,500 to 12,500 sq. ft.
Residential Very Low Density	RVL	The focus of these areas is traditional single family residential uses at a scale consistent with historic development patterns on the west side of the Cowlitz River, which is approximately 4 units per acre. ADUs should be encouraged to increase affordable housing options. Lots sizes should average 12,500 sq. ft.



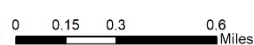
The Packwood Plan

Future Land Use Map

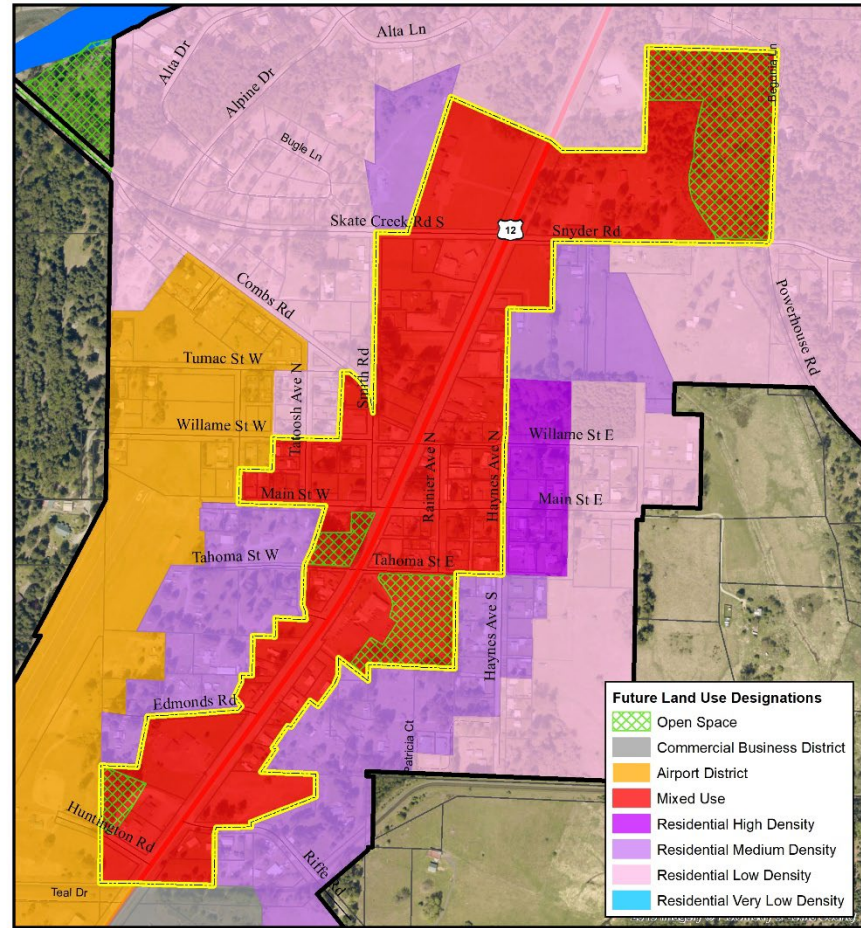
- Subarea
- Highway 12
- Roads
- Parcels
- River Channel

Updated 01/02/2024

Planning Division, Community Development



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The Packwood Plan

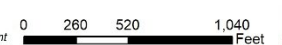
Future Land Use Map Downtown Packwood

- Subarea Boundary
- Downtown Packwood
- Highway 12
- Roads
- Parcels

Note - Lands with no Future Land Use Designation are proposed to maintain the existing zoning

Updated 01/02/2024

Planning Division, Community Development



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Map 11: Future Land Use Map

Map 12: Future Land Use Map - Downtown Packwood

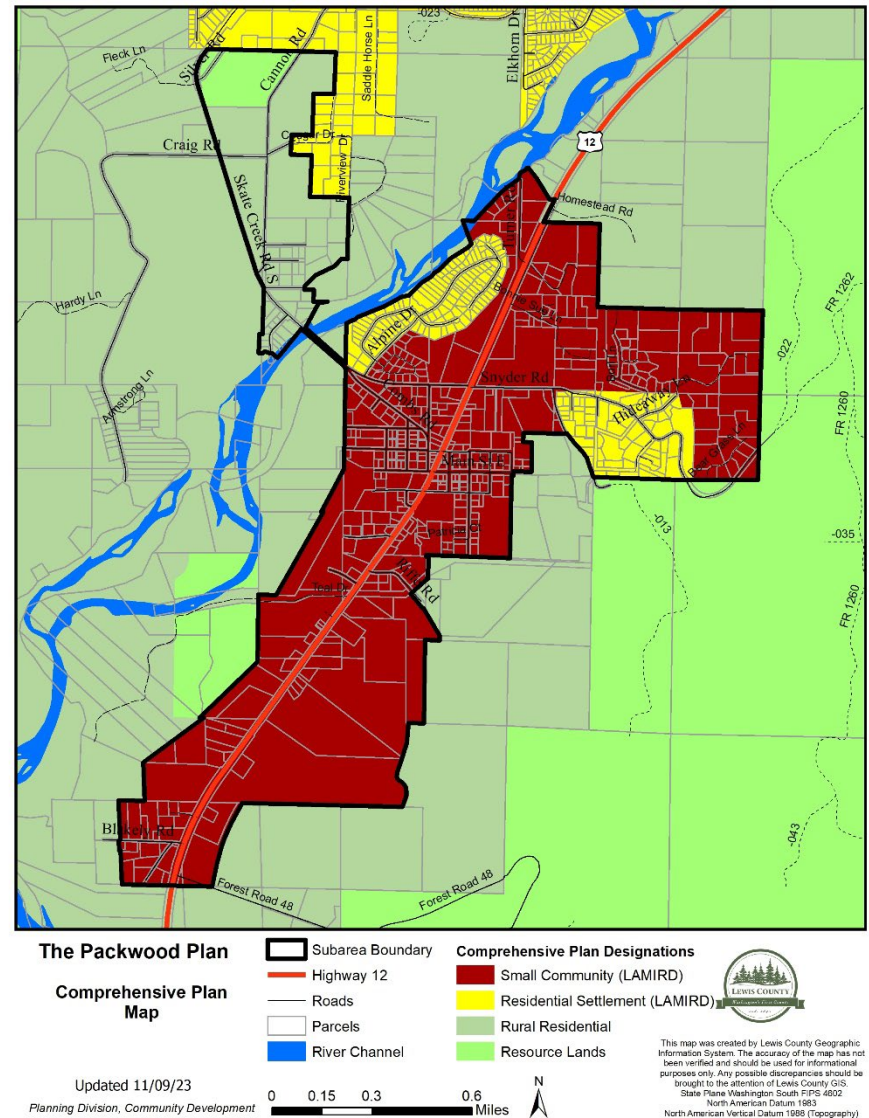
Lands with no future land use designation on the maps are proposed to maintain the existing zoning as shown on Map 5, as well as the existing development regulations. Only those areas with future land use designations are proposed for new zoning designations and development regulations in Phase 2.

January 2, 2024

Map 13 shows the **existing** Lewis County Comprehensive Plan map designations. The designations for most of the subarea are Small Community and Residential Settlement. Small Community is described as “detached residential, commercial or industrial structures in an existing settlement. Some attached buildings are also present. Predominantly small scale, though some larger commercial, institutional or industrial buildings may be present.” The level of urbanization is considered “moderate.” Residential Settlement is described as “detached residential structures in a residential settlement.” The level of urbanization is considered “low to low/moderate.” Both designations are a LAMIRD Type I under the Growth Management Act.

The Future Land Use Maps (Map 11 and Map 12 on the previous page) are intended to show how zoning should change over the 20-year planning horizon to achieve the Land Use goals and policies stated in this section. The maps depict the future development types and densities described in Table 2. The goal is to concentrate development in and near Downtown Packwood. The 100-year floodplain and wetlands are taken into consideration with the intent of not increasing residential development beyond what is currently allowed in these critical areas. New zoning rules, created during Phase 2, would impact **new** development or redevelopment. **Existing legal nonconforming development and uses may stay, be maintained and be replaced in the current footprint.**

The future land uses described in Table 2 are consistent with the description of Small Community and Residential Settlement. Therefore, for those areas the Future Land Use Map is consistent with the existing Lewis County Comprehensive Plan and Countywide Planning Policies. The other lands within the subarea are currently designated Other Rural Residential with detached residential uses on standard rural lots typically 5-20 acres in size. The designation for those lands will need to be amended in the Lewis County Comprehensive Plan during Phase 2 to implement the Future Land Use Map.



Map 13: Existing Comprehensive Plan Designations

## Design Guidelines

The purpose of design guidelines is to create a cohesive look for Packwood that retains the small town charm and character that exists today. The guidelines provide direction for the general design of **new** structures. Design guidelines will be objective, yet flexible.

The current design of Downtown Packwood is referred to as “Northwest Mountain.” Northwest Mountain style is a mix of rustic and regional architecture that has historic roots in logging and mining towns. Northwest Mountain style is unique to and exemplifies the look of small mountain towns in Washington State. Many existing buildings in Packwood already showcase this style including the Historic Hotel Packwood, White Pass Sports Hut, Packwood Brewery and Packwood Visitor Center. Northwest Mountain style could also include more modern looking buildings that still fit with the character of traditional mountain towns. The primary difference between traditional and modern Northwest Mountain architecture is a pitched roof (traditional) versus a slant or shed roof (modern) and the extensive use of glass windows (modern).

Design guidelines should be applied to **new** development on properties that front Highway 12 in Downtown Packwood, as well as properties that front Main Street or Willame Street within two blocks of Highway 12. The guidelines should be incorporated into major alterations to existing development along Highway 12 in Downtown Packwood to the extent practical. While encouraged for other development in Packwood, the guidelines should not be required for structures that do not front Highway 12, Main Street or Willame Street. The intent of focusing on these areas is to create a unique space that is visibly identifiable as Packwood’s downtown core.

In general, to meet the guidelines, buildings should be no taller than two stories, or 35 feet, and have pitched or slant/shed roofs. Exterior facades facing Highway 12, Main Street or Willame Street should make extensive use of natural wood and stone, or synthetic materials that resemble wood or stone, including exposed exterior support beams. The color palette for siding, if not natural wood/stone color, should be brown, green or gray hues that match the natural landscape. The intent of these guidelines is to ensure that new buildings fit within the “small town” look of Packwood and are cohesive with the existing historic buildings. The intent is not to have buildings match; each building is encouraged to be unique with a generally cohesive look.

To further create a cohesive look and design in Downtown Packwood, guidelines should also be applied to new signs on properties fronting Highway 12. New signs should resemble the existing historic signs in Packwood. The signs should be made of natural wood, or synthetic material that resembles a natural wood, and have exterior illumination. New plastic signs with interior illumination should be discouraged fronting Highway 12.

**Examples of Northwest Mountain Design – Packwood, WA**



*Historic Hotel Packwood (source: packwoodwa.com)*



*White Pass Sports Hut (source: visitrainier.com)*



*Cowlitz River Lodge (source: tripadvisor.com)*



*Packwood Post Office (Photo by E Kalish, Sept. 2012. Part of the Post Mark Collectors Club (PMCC) collection)*



**Examples of Northwest Mountain Sign Design – Packwood, WA**



Source: Cabin Quilts Facebook

Note – Sign images copied from Google internet image search

## Housing

### Housing Goal 1 – Provide a range of affordable housing for residents at all income levels.

Affordable housing is a primary concern for residents and business owners. Affordable housing means everyone in Packwood is able to find housing that meets their income constraints. In practice, that means ensuring a wide range of housing types that meet the needs of minimum to median wage earners. Packwood also has a high number of seasonal workers. In the winter, people come to work at White Pass Ski Area. In the summer, people come to work at Mount Rainier National Park or for the U.S. Forest Service. Many of these people need half-year rental options that are affordable.

A diversity of housing types can be designed to fit the small town character of Packwood by limiting the overall size (footprint, height and bulk) of housing structures and requiring development densities similar to existing neighborhoods (*see Land Use Goals and Policies*). A traditional single family house can be divided into two, three or four dwelling units and stay within the same footprint. Figure 1 shows an example of a duplex with attached accessory dwelling unit (ADU) within a similar square footage as a single family house. A traditional single family house can also be used as a dormitory or hostel to provide even more affordable rental housing. These options spread the cost burden of the structure and land to more than one person or family making it more affordable than a traditional single family house.

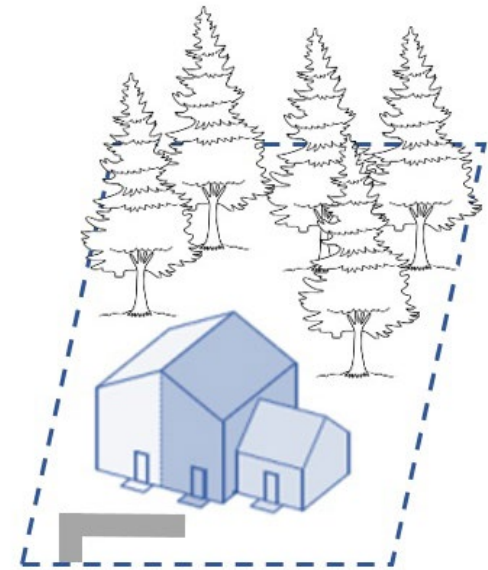


Figure 1: Example Duplex with Attached ADU

Note – Housing units could be stacked as well as side-by-side.

### Policies

HS1.1: Encourage high and medium density housing in and near Downtown Packwood that is designed to fit “small town” character.

HS1.2: Provide design guidelines that allow multiple dwelling units to be included within a single structure that looks like a traditional single family home (Figure 1).

HS1.3: Encourage a diversity of single family housing types including duplexes, tiny home villages and ADUs.

HS1.4: Encourage similar residential development patterns and lot sizes between established neighborhoods.

HS1.5: Encourage a balance between short term rentals and affordable residential housing options to support people working in and around Packwood.

HS1.6: Encourage the development of affordable long-term rental units such as dormitories and hostels.

HS1.7: Support options to alleviate property cost burden for people on low and fixed incomes.

## Economic Development

### Economic Development Goal 1 – Support a range of locally owned businesses to meet the needs of residents and tourists.

Residents need many services during their everyday lives including grocery, medical, dental, pharmacy, education, banking, electrician, plumber, veterinarian, clothing, salon, etc. When these essential services are located a long way away (20+ miles), it can result in many long vehicle trips that are costly and potentially unsafe, or people leaving Packwood and choosing to live in another community. Providing services where people live has many benefits that support families living in Packwood and people being able to age in place.

Tourism, the primary economy of Packwood, is also supported by the service industry including local grocery stores, restaurants, sporting goods stores, clothing stores, gift stores and local events and attractions. Tourists also need some of the services that residents require including medical, pharmacy and banking.



*Arbor Health Clinic in Packwood (Photo: Arbor Health)*

### Policies

ED1.1: Work with partners, such as the Economic Alliance of Lewis County, to attract and retain grocery, medical, dental, veterinarian and other specialized services.

ED1.2: Provide infrastructure that supports grocery, restaurants, medical, dental, veterinarian and other specialized services.

ED1.3: Work with partners, such as the East Lewis County Public Development Authority, to provide rental space for new start-up small businesses.

ED1.4: Discourage franchise businesses that can outcompete locally owned businesses.

ED1.4: Work with partners, such as the East Lewis County Chamber of Commerce, to provide education and mentorship for new business owners.

**Economic Development Goal 2 – Support employment options that provide living wage jobs.**

In 2021, a living wage job in Washington State was roughly \$42,000 per year or \$20 per hour. In 2022, the minimum wage was \$14.49 per hour. Affordable rent or mortgage for someone making a living wage is \$1,260 per month; for minimum wage affordable rent is \$750 per month. Most service industry jobs (e.g., restaurant server, house cleaner, etc.) pay a minimum wage not a living wage. People living in Packwood and the surrounding area need living wage job opportunities to afford housing and living expenses. In addition, homeowners and businesses owners need specialized skilled laborers including carpenter, electrician, plumber, etc. to build and maintain structures. Skilled labor occupations and other specially trained occupations (e.g., pharmacy, veterinarian, etc.) generally pay higher than minimum wage.

**Policies**

ED2.1: Work with partners, such as the Economic Alliance of Lewis County, to attract new electricians, plumbers, carpenters and other skilled laborers, as well as medical, dental, pharmacy, veterinarian and banking jobs that pay a living wage.

ED2.2: Create a partnership with Centralia College East, and others, to support trade skills and educational opportunities.

ED2.3: Support Packwood Timberland Library's continuing education programs for local residents.

ER2.4: Work with Lewis County and the U.S. Forest Service to improve and maintain Skate Creek Road/Forest Road 52 from Packwood to National Park Highway to provide year-round access to and from employment opportunities such as Mount Rainier National Park.



*New Construction in Packwood (Photo: Mindy Brooks)*

**Economic Development Goal 3 – Grow a sustainable retail economic base.**

Packwood’s economy is primarily based on tourism. Destination and experience purchasing is increasingly necessary to support the local economy. This includes creating local experience shopping that fits the small town character of Packwood. Local retail businesses also provide jobs for residents.

**Policies**

ED3.1: Work with partners, such as Discover Lewis County and White Pass Scenic Byway, to create an economic development strategy that grows a sustainable tourism economy.

ED3.2: Create a concentrated retail area in Downtown Packwood to encourage people to shop and dine in town. *(See also Transportation Goals and Policies)*

ED3.3: Support development of new, and retention of, existing restaurants, coffee shops, bakeries, bars and breweries that provide a unique dining experience.

ED3.4: Support development of new, and retention of, existing stores including clothes, footwear, sporting goods, home goods and gifts that provide locally-made or Packwood-branded goods.

ED3.5: Require national brands to develop neighborhood scale buildings with unique-to-Packwood shopping and dining experiences.

ED3.6: Encourage the co-location of services in a single building such as a coffee shop in a clothing store or wine tasting in a gift shop.



*Tionesta Market Village, Washington, Iowa*

Source: <https://smallbizsurvival.com/2017/01/innovative-rural-business-models-spread-opportunity-in-small-towns.html>

## Transportation

### **Transportation Goal 1 – Make the streets more accessible and safe for bicyclists and pedestrians.**

Highway 12 is used by pedestrians, and to a lesser extent bicyclists, to access businesses in Downtown Packwood. Streets should be safe and accessible, particularly during the peak summer and winter seasons with a high volume of tourists. Traffic needs to be travelling at slow speeds when approaching and through downtown. The Franklin Bridge (aka Skate Creek Bridge) should provide better pedestrian and bicycle access between the residential neighborhoods on the west side of the Cowlitz River and Downtown. Map 14 is a Transportation Concept that depicts how the policies could be implemented.

#### **Policies**

TR1.1: Create pedestrian and bicycle routes along Highway 12 in Downtown Packwood and along Skate Creek Road from Highway 12 to Cannon Road.

TR1.2: Add crosswalks at primary intersections that cross Highway 12 in Downtown Packwood.

TR1.3: Add lighting along Highway 12 in Downtown Packwood.

TR1.4: Add traffic calming along Highway 12 between Skate Creek Road and Huntington Road.

TR1.5: Reduce the speed limit to 25 mph on Highway 12 in Downtown Packwood.

TR1.6: Improve snow removal along Highway 12 and side streets to maintain safe walkways and adequate parking in Downtown Packwood.

### **Transportation Goal 2 – Improve street connectivity in and near Downtown Packwood**

Street connectivity is important for safety because it provides fire and emergency service access to houses and businesses throughout Packwood. Connected streets will also provide alternate routes through Packwood to avoid increasing traffic on Highway 12. New streets can provide access to properties that will support residential development. Providing pedestrian and bicycles facilities on side streets will decrease car trips to the Downtown commercial core, reducing traffic and parking impacts on Highway 12.

#### **Policies**

TR2.1: Maintain and expand the historic block pattern near Downtown Packwood.

TR2.2: Improve existing streets and add new streets near Downtown Packwood to improve neighborhood connectivity and emergency vehicle access.

TR2.3: Work with Lewis County and the U.S. Forest Service to improve and maintain Skate Creek Road/Forest Road 52 to provide a year-round emergency route from Packwood to Highway 7.

**Transportation Goal 3 – Improve options and availability of parking along Highway 12 and local streets near Downtown Packwood.**

Parking in Downtown Packwood is based on peak tourism season demand in the summer and winter and is therefore unique compared to other towns. The highest peak parking, not including the flea markets, are summer evenings between Thursday and Saturday. Parking includes automobiles and also recreational vehicles that require more space. Parking on Highway 12 should be designed to improve safety for vehicles traveling along Highway 12 and for pedestrians accessing hotels, restaurants, stores and community amenities (doctor's office, library, museum, grocery store) in downtown. New on-site surface parking fronting Highway 12 should be discouraged because it reduces pedestrian access to businesses.

In addition, when Snoqualmie Pass and Stevens Pass are closed, significant semi-truck traffic is diverted to Highway 12 across White Pass. The existing rest stop, which is located 5 miles southwest of Packwood, is not large enough to accommodate the truck traffic and many trucks chose to park along Highway 12 in Downtown Packwood. This creates a safety hazard by blocking visibility to and from exiting business parking lots and side streets onto Highway 12. It also takes up parking used by residents and visitors.

**Policies**

TR3.1: Designate on-street parking that makes efficient use of Highway 12 right-of-way and provides safe pedestrian access to businesses.

TR3.2: Designate parking options for RVs, trailers and semi-trucks that support safety on Highway 12 and access to businesses.

TR3.3: Require new on-site surface parking for businesses facing Highway 12 to be located behind or to the side of the primary building.

TR3.4: Designate on-street parking on local streets near Downtown Packwood, wherever possible.

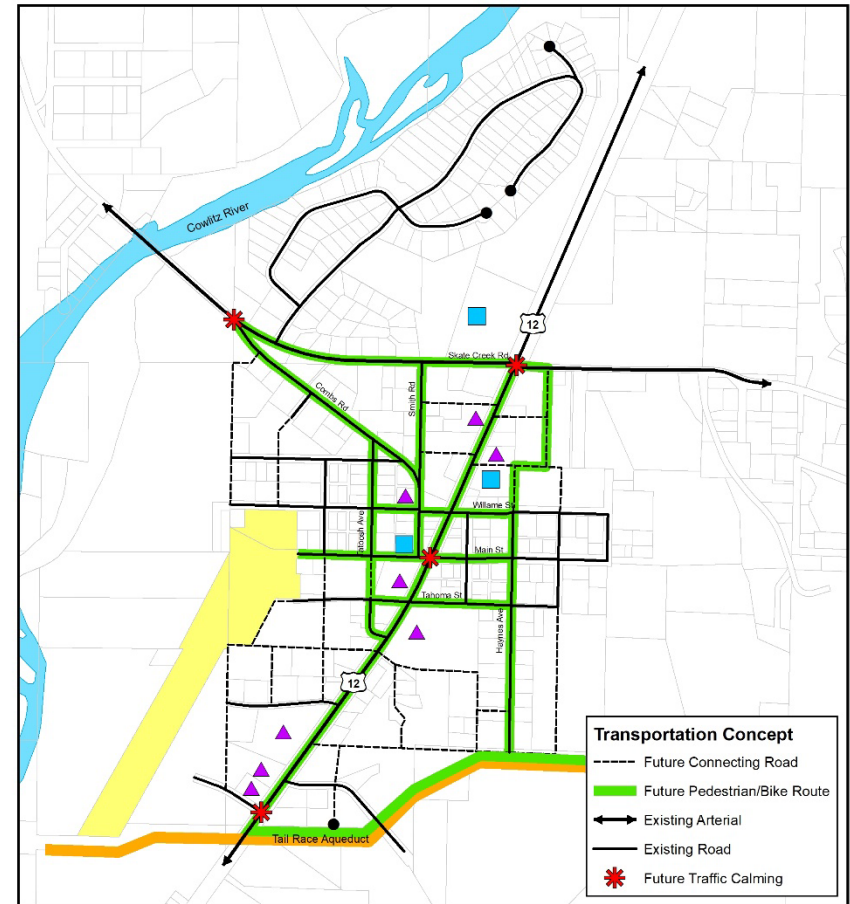
TR3.5: Require on-site parking for new residential development.

### Packwood Transportation Concept

Downtown Packwood is bisected by Highway 12. Along Highway 12, there are many community amenities including (from north to south) two gas stations and an electric car charging station, Arbor Health Clinic, Blanton’s Grocery Store, U.S. Post Office, Packwood Timberland Library and park, White Pass Country Museum, Fire District 10 Station, Packwood Community Hall and Packwood Senior Center. In addition, between the amenities are multiple hotels, restaurants and shops. All of these are accessed by residents and tourists; however, there are no multimodal facilities, except two crosswalks at Highway 12 and Main Street and Skate Creek, for people to walk or bike safely between destinations.

Map 14 is the transportation concept. Increasing the walkability of Downtown Packwood will have multiple benefits. First, it will create a safer environment for residents and tourists by calming traffic as it moves through town and designating walking and biking routes. Second, by getting people out of their cars, it will increase opportunities for people to frequent local businesses. Studies have shown that when people are encouraged to walk in a downtown area, they tend to stop at more businesses and spend more money, thus improving the local economy.

This concept does not suggest what kinds of facilities should be used to create walking and biking routes or to calm traffic. There are many options that can be explored in a future study to determine what types of facilities are appropriate for Packwood. The concept also proposes new general street alignments that will extend the existing downtown block pattern and provide access to new residential development over time. This will improve safety by providing access for fire and emergency vehicles. The actual street alignments will be determined as future development occurs by Lewis County Public Works and Packwood Fire District 10.



Map 14: Packwood Transportation Concept



### Highway Design Examples

Below are two examples of roadway concepts that could be implemented within the existing Highway 12 100-foot right-of-way in Packwood. These are intended to depict what is possible, but are not exhaustive of the options that could meet the goals and policies for transportation.



Figure 2: Highway 12 Cross-Section Concept, Rochester, WA (Source: Thurston Regional Planning Council)



Figure 3: Back-in Angle Parking Concept (Source: <https://carfromjapan.com/article/driving-tips/guideline-for-easy-parking/>)

## Recreation and Environment

### Recreation and Environment Goal 1 – Foster year-round recreational experiences for all ages and abilities.

Thousands of tourists come to Packwood annually to experience nature, hike in the Mount Rainier National Park and the Goat Rocks Wilderness, camp, ski, mountain bike, fish and hunt. However, most of these activities are located outside of Packwood. Increasing in-town recreational activities will continue to build community, support families living in the Packwood area and increase local tourism.

### Policies

RE1.1: Maintain and improve the PUD Ballpark, museum playground and ball fields, library park and Packwood Community Hall park for recreational uses focusing on families and improved access for all abilities.

RE1.2: Encourage use of public spaces for community events including music, movies, town picnics, organized sport events, etc.

RE1.3: Increase indoor recreational opportunities such as basketball courts, rock climbing, etc.

RE1.4: Provide safe walking, biking and rolling routes and trails in and around Packwood.

RE1.5: Add accessibility improvements to recreational facilities for the physically challenged and hearing and sight impaired.

RE1.6: Increase information about and wayfinding to recreation locations and events.

RE1.7: Enhance views of Mount Rainier, Tatoosh Wilderness and Goat Rocks Wilderness by burying utility lines and capping building heights.



*Packwood Mountain Festival at the White Pass Country Museum (source: Destination Packwood Twitter)*



*Example of power lines obscuring view of Mount Rainier and Butter Butte (Photo: Mindy Brooks)*

**Recreation and Environment Goal 2 – Protect, maintain and enhance the natural environment for people and wildlife.**

Packwood is nestled between Mount Rainier National Park, Tatoosh Wilderness and the Goat Rocks Wilderness. The Cowlitz River flows southwest through the community and provides habitat for salmon and Mountain White Fish. Wildlife including elk, bear, coyote, cougar, beaver, bald eagle, osprey and many others live in and around Packwood. People and wildlife can coexist by setting aside undeveloped wild places for wildlife and having safe interactions by not approaching or feeding wildlife, but observing them from a distance.

**Policies**

RE2.1: Protect and enhance important natural areas including Cowlitz River and tributary streams (Hall Creek, Skate Creek, Butter Creek, Lake Creek, Hinkle Tinkle Creek), Skate Creek Park, and stands of large trees in downtown Packwood.

RE2.2: Continue to protect the ground water, which is the primary source of drinking water for Packwood.

RE2.3: Support efforts to make the community resilient to natural hazards, including wildfire, flooding, channel migration and extreme wind and snow events.

RE2.4: Protect appropriate and safe wildlife migration corridors through and around Packwood.

RE2.5: Provide education about proper interactions with wildlife.

RE2.6: Preserve open spaces in and near Downtown Packwood for outdoor recreational use, including Packwood Station riparian area, library park area, museum playground and ball fields, and Packwood Community Hall Park.

RE2.7: Encourage the use of green building techniques in new development to reduce long-term impacts on the environment.



*Skate Creek Park and Cowlitz River (Photo: Mindy Brooks)*

## Public Facilities

### Public Facilities Goal 1 – Improve facilities and infrastructure to support planned growth.

Much of the desired future uses and development will require municipal water and sewer services. The Lewis County Water Sewer District 3 service area includes most of the current Small Town Mixed Use and Small Town Industrial zones. Sewer is anticipated in a similar vicinity as the water district service area. Additional facilities and infrastructure will be needed to support affordable housing and local businesses.

### Policies

PF1.1: Provide municipal wastewater treatment to properties within a similar geography as the Lewis County Water Sewer District 3 service area.

PF1.2: Plan for expansion of the municipal water system and wastewater system over the 20-year planning horizon.

PF1.3: Provide adequate emergency services and facilities to serve existing and new residents, businesses and visitors.

PF1.4: Plan for stormwater management associated with new development, including improvements to Highway 12 (*see Transportation*).

PF1.5: Encourage installation of high-speed fiber optics internet to all residents and businesses in the subarea plan boundary.

PF1.6: Support “dig once” to coordinate utility and infrastructure construction projects to save on costs and disruptions associated with repeat excavation.

PF1.7: Provide full trash and recycling services to Packwood’s residential neighborhoods.

PF1.8: Support continued use of the Packwood Airport and prevent incompatible land uses and development surrounding the airport when practicable.



*Packwood Fire Station (source: Google Earth)*

## 5: NEXT STEPS

Phase 2 of the Packwood Subarea Plan will coincide with the Lewis County Comprehensive Plan periodic update, which will be completed in June 2025. Implementation is expected to include amendments to the Comprehensive Plan policies and maps, new zoning designations and new and updated development regulations, all of which must be consistent with the vision, goals and policies of this document.

Community engagement will continue to be a primary focus of the Phase 2 process. The Packwood Subarea Plan Public Participation Plan (Attachment A) will be updated to include Phase 2. The existing Community Advisory Committee members will be invited to participate and membership will be opened to allow new members from the community.

The following priority actions were identified during public engagement activities in Phase 1. The Community Advisory Committee encourages Lewis County and other agencies, organizations and property owners to move forward with these actions within five years of adopting the subarea plan. Implementing these actions will set the stage for meeting all of the goals and policies and achieving the 20-year vision for Packwood.

### Priority Action Items

1. Construct a municipal sewer system that serves Downtown Packwood and the historic mill site and can be expanded over 20 years to help achieve the adopted subarea plan goals and policies for housing and economic development.
2. Decrease speed limit on Highway 12 from 35 mph to 25 mph between Skate Creek Road and Huntington Road.
3. Add crosswalk striping and lighting at the intersections of Highway 12 and Skate Creek Road, Willame Street, Main Street and Tahoma Street.
4. Create safe pedestrian/bike path(s) along Highway 12 from Skate Creek Road to Huntington Road.
5. Create design guidelines for Downtown Packwood to ensure that new buildings will be cohesive with small town character.
6. Maintain Skate Creek Park as a public natural area that provides nearby year-round recreational opportunities for residents and tourists.

Note – Implementation of the Packwood Subarea Plan will also include actions that are outside of the subarea planning scope.

# **Packwood Subarea Plan**

**Adopted January 2, 2024  
Ordinance 1350**