



# ANSWERS TO THE MOST COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ANNEXATION

City of Ferndale Community Development Department  
2095 Main Street/ PO Box 936  
Ferndale, WA 98248 (360) 384-4006  
[www.cityofferndale.org](http://www.cityofferndale.org)

**Background:** In 1991, Washington State established the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA), which is intended, in part, to identify the areas that cities may expand to in the future. Until the GMA was approved, there were concerns that significant population growth in Washington State would lead to sprawl, reducing quality of life and traditional resource industries such as logging and farming.

Sprawl does not mean only the spread of development over the landscape. Sprawl can also reflect the density of developments as they occur. Ideally, cities will promote more dense development and will utilize vertical construction techniques in order to accommodate population growth and slow the development of large-lot detached single family residences into the countryside.

In an effort to establish logical long-range expansion goals, cities and counties that must comply with GMA (including Ferndale and Whatcom County, respectively) work together to identify realistic population projections, to establish reasonable Urban Growth Areas (UGA's), and to construct zoning ordinances that will result in adequate urban densities. UGA's are those areas outside of the current city limits that the City may expand into (annex) within a twenty-year period. The City may not expand into areas that are not identified as Urban Growth Areas.

UGA's are typically intended to be logical, uniform expansions of a city's boundaries: UGA's should not extend the City linearly (along a major road, for instance), or to promote "leap frog" development wherein the UGA is not physically contiguous to the existing City Limits. While many UGA's consist of undeveloped or under-developed properties, the GMA also suggests that unincorporated islands of dense development be included.

## *What is annexation?*

Annexation is a procedure for bringing unincorporated areas of a county into an adjacent incorporated city. The most common form of annexation is the "petition method", whereby property owners or residents initiate and sign a petition asking to become part of the City. After an area is annexed, the City becomes the primary provider of local government services.

## *Who is eligible for annexation?*

Only properties located within the Ferndale Urban Growth Area are eligible for annexation.

## *What is the procedure for annexation?*

1. **Pre-Notice of Intent Meeting:** This is a required step in the annexation process in which the applicant meets with City Planning staff to discuss general process issues, area-specific concerns, recommended size and configuration of annexation area, proposed zoning, and other issues or concerns. Call 685-2367 or 685-2368 to request a meeting.
2. **Pre-Notice of Intent Neighborhood Meeting:** The applicant shall hold a neighborhood meeting within the City limits or within the annexation area. Meeting preparations and follow-up shall be at the applicant's own expense. Such meeting shall be consistent with the following requirements:
  - a. The applicant shall obtain a list of all property owners within the annexation area and all property owners within 300 feet of the boundaries of the annexation area from the Whatcom County Assessor.
  - b. Notification of the meeting time and place shall be sent by U.S. Mail at least 14 days prior to the meeting to all parties on the above list.



## ANSWERS TO THE MOST COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ANNEXATION

City of Ferndale Community Development Department  
2095 Main Street/ PO Box 936  
Ferndale, WA 98248 (360) 384-4006  
[www.cityofferndale.org](http://www.cityofferndale.org)

- c. The applicant shall advertise the meeting time and place in a newspaper of general circulation at least 14 days prior to the meeting.
  - d. Public Notices shall be posted on the annexation site in highly visible locations as determined by Community Development staff utilizing approved Land Use Action signs available at City Hall for a nominal fee.
  - e. Notice of the meeting shall be send to Whatcom County Planning and Development Services.
  - f. Affidavits of all postings and mailings shall be submitted to the City.
  - g. A record of the meeting shall be kept in the form of both written minutes and an electronic recording.
3. **Notice of Intent to Annex Submittal:** The applicant completes and submits the attached form along with appropriate fees to City staff. Staff must review the materials for completeness. If incomplete, the applicant shall be notified in writing of specific information required to complete the application. Within 30 days of submission of a complete Notice of Intent to Annex staff will present the notice to the City Council for a vote.
  4. **Council Action:** If the Council votes to accept the Notice of Intent the applicant may begin to process a “Petition for Annexation.” If the Council votes to reject the Notice of Intent the applicant may resubmit a Notice of Intent no sooner than 6 months from the date of the Council’s rejection.
  5. **Petition for Annexation filed with City** – this stage and all subsequent actions require separate forms and will not be considered prior to the completion of Stage 4. The annexation petitioners shall be required to deposit funds with the City of Ferndale sufficient to complete a fiscal analysis of the potential annexation. Such a deposit may range from \$10,000 to \$20,000 or more.
  6. Certificate of Petition and completeness issued by City.
  7. Technical Review and analysis conducted
  8. Planning Commission Public Hearing
  9. City Council Public Hearing
  10. Whatcom County Boundary Review Board Review
  11. Annexation Ordinance adopted by City Council
  12. Office of Financial Management Review and Approval

### ***Will my taxes increase?***

*While each property owner’s situation is unique, and each annexation will be slightly different, most taxes actually decrease slightly, and cost of living is similarly reduced. There are a variety of reasons for this, including:*

- *Lower fire insurance rates due to a higher level of fire protection available in the City*
- *Elimination of a 50% surcharge for sewer and water existing beyond the City limits*
- *Once connected to City water and sewer, elimination of septic inspection and repair fees.*
- *Elimination of a County Road District Levy*



## ANSWERS TO THE MOST COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ANNEXATION

City of Ferndale Community Development Department  
2095 Main Street/ PO Box 936  
Ferndale, WA 98248 (360) 384-4006  
[www.cityofferndale.org](http://www.cityofferndale.org)

### *What services does the City provide to an area that is annexed?*

Full time (24-hour) fire protection and emergency medical service  
City Police service, including animal control  
City sewer and water utilities  
City street maintenance and improvement  
City parks, recreational facilities and recreation programs  
City educational programs  
Over a dozen community boards and commissions  
Urban land use planning  
Urban building regulation and inspection  
Better ratio of citizens to elected officials (1: approx. 1,300, compared to 1: approx. 26,000).  
City Council representation  
City residents who are registered voters may also vote in all municipal elections, be elected to City Offices, and to serve on a variety of appointed City boards and commissions.

*Note: Garbage collection, recycling, natural gas, electricity, cable television, and television are private services.*

### *Will I be forced to hook up to City sewer or water upon annexation?*

No. Existing wells and septic systems are permitted unless the Whatcom County Health Department determines that they are a health hazard. If there is a health concern, you will be required to hook up to City services. New development must be constructed to City standards, including City water and sewer.

### *Will annexation change my zoning and Land Use?*

Not dramatically. When establishing UGA's, the City and County work together to identify compatible zoning districts. As a result, the types of land uses allowed in your area may not change, although the density and scale of the land uses may increase. Please remember that zoning designations are not permanent, and may be changed over time.

### *Will annexation effect growth in my area?*

The act of annexing property will not in itself trigger growth in your area. However, the scale of growth in a city is different from growth in a county; cities are required by state law to plan for urban densities, and to supply urban services. Developments in your area are expected to reflect these requirements.

### *What if I'm the only one who doesn't want to be annexed?*

Most annexation procedures require participation by a majority of property owners in the affected area (typically sixty percent). This means that there will be cases where property owners are annexed into the City even if they have opposed the annexation. The Growth Management Act is designed to provide property owners with advance notice of possible annexations by identified Urban Growth Areas, but the City and County realize that many property owners are unfamiliar with the term. The City is in the process of creating an "annexation blueprint" which will provide increased certainty of when annexations may be considered in different areas of the UGA.

### *How will annexation affect where my child attends school?*

Annexation will not affect school boundaries, or where your child attends school.



## ANSWERS TO THE MOST COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ANNEXATION

City of Ferndale Community Development Department  
2095 Main Street/ PO Box 936  
Ferndale, WA 98248 (360) 384-4006  
[www.cityofferndale.org](http://www.cityofferndale.org)

### *Where can I find out about City Meetings, Zoning Changes, and Other Items that Could Affect my Property?*

Visit the City of Ferndale website at [www.cityofferndale.org](http://www.cityofferndale.org). Public notices are also posted in the local Newspaper of Record, the Ferndale Record, every Wednesday.

### *Still have more questions?*

Annexation procedures for the City of Ferndale are described in Ferndale Municipal Code 13.38, available online at <http://www.codepublishing.com/wa/Ferndale>

The Municipal Resource and Services Center (MRSC) of Washington has published an Annexation Handbook, available at <http://www.mrsc.org/Publications/textah.aspx>

The Revised Code of Washington includes provisions for annexation procedures in Sections 35.13 and 35A.14 RCW.

*Specific requirements are explained in annexation application packets. You must consult with the Community Development Staff prior to initiating the annexation process.*