



Annexation Frequently Asked Questions

Will I be required to pay for garbage service?

Yes. All residents must have a subscription to garbage and recycling service through the Sanitary Service Company. You may choose from many different service levels to suit your needs and budget. Sanitary Service Company will continue to be your service provider, but your rates may change.

Will my child have to change schools?

No. School district boundaries are independent of city boundaries and will not change as a result of annexation.

Will my zoning change?

Following annexation, the City will assign a zoning designation similar to what currently exists for adjacent properties already in the City.

Can I have farm animals?

If you currently have farm animals nothing will change when annexed as long as the use or number of animals is not expanded.

Will my rural setting change?

The City respects your rights as a property owner and annexation will not require you to develop your property. However, urban scale development will be permitted as a result of annexation.

Will my taxes/utility rates change?

The total taxes a residential property owner would pay if their property were annexed are generally very similar to those already being paid in the County. Tax structures are different in the City and the County. City utility tax will apply to water, sewer, storm, garbage, power, gas, phone, and TV.

Will my fire service change?

No, the entirety of Ferndale's unincorporated Urban Growth Area is served by Whatcom County Fire District 7, as is the City itself.

If annexed, do I obtain building permits from the County or City?

After annexation, building permits will be obtained from the City and not the County. In your area, the City and the County building codes are the same.

Does the City provide animal control services?

Yes, the City works closely with the Humane Society in order to provide a full level of animal control services.

Would annexation trigger a requirement to install curbs, gutters and sidewalks?

No. Curbs, gutters, and sidewalks are triggered with substantial redevelopment.

What is Annexation?

Annexation is the procedure for bringing unincorporated areas of a County into an adjacent city. If an area is annexed, the city becomes the primary provider of local government services such as police and utilities. The most common form of annexation is by petition.

What is an Urban Growth Area?

Ferndale Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) are unincorporated areas next to city limits identified by Whatcom County that are characterized by urban growth. Establishment of UGAs is required by the Washington [Growth Management Act of 1990](#) for the purpose of encouraging urban growth within existing urban areas. Several UGAs are being considered to be petitioned for potential annexation by the City of Ferndale.

Why is the City exploring annexation?

The Growth Management Act of 1990 anticipates that all areas defined as Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) will become part of (annexed into) the City within a designated period of time. Whatcom County does not have the resources to support urban areas while the City of Ferndale does. Due to this, both the County and the City agree that these areas should be planned for eventual incorporation into the City of Ferndale to best serve the residents of the UGAs and to responsibly plan for future growth.

What is the annexation process?

Washington State law guides the annexation process. Many methods exist, ranging from petition-based to agreements between government authorities. The most used annexation method is the petition method. The petition starts with interested residents submitting a Notice of Intent to Annex that represents either:

- at least 10% of the residents of the area to be annexed, or
- the owners of at least 10% of the land value in the area to be annexed, per [Whatcom County Assessor's office assessed valuation](#).

If the City Council decides that the proposed annexation is good for the public, it may allow the proponents of the annexation to begin a public process to study the annexation proposal. In this case, the supportive residents must use official petition forms to collect the signatures of property owners that represent at least 60% of the total assessed land value of the area requested for annexation.

At the end of the public process, the City Council votes for or against the annexation in question. There is no guarantee of annexation by filing a petition and application for annexation to the City.

What if the majority of our area does not want to be in the City?

If a significant majority of property owners do not support becoming part of the City, it is unlikely that the proponents of the annexation will be able to meet the statutory requirements for a petition to annex.

What if I don't want to be part of Ferndale but my neighbors do?

Under the petition method, property owners may choose not to sign annexation petitions; however, if an annexation petition is endorsed by property owners representing at least 60% of the total assessed land value of an area, the City Council may approve an annexation of that area in its entirety.

I want to talk to someone about this in more detail, whom do I contact?

Questions generally related to City of Ferndale annexation may be directed to Assistant Planner, Jesse Ashbaugh of the Ferndale Planning & Community Development Department via email to jesseashbaugh@cityofferndale.org or (360) 685-2368.

What changes right away?

Most immediate changes that would come after annexation are administrative. The City of Ferndale would assume responsibility for providing urban services including police, city-provided water, sewer and storm utilities, and infrastructure maintenance. Residents will immediately gain access to city programs, community services and representation by elected city officials.

What new fees will affect property owners?

New development within the UGAs will be subject to impact fees relating to park development; water, sewer, stormwater, and transportation improvements; and school facilities. These are enforced to ensure that the developer pays for the additional stress on existing services caused by increases in population.

Will I be able to vote for the Mayor and City Council?

Yes, as a resident of Ferndale you will be able to vote and stand for elections for the Mayor of Ferndale and for the City Council. You will also be eligible to serve on various City boards and commissions.