

PROJECT MEMO



TO:	Mike Stevens, City of Richland	DATE:	December 31, 2025
FROM:	Nicole Stickney Pasco - (509) 380-5883	PROJECT NO.:	2240885.30
		PROJECT NAME:	Richland 2026 Comprehensive Plan Update
SUBJECT:	Utilities Element Staff Report		

As a part of the Draft Comprehensive Plan Update effort, the AHBL consultant team has worked to update the Utilities Element of the Comprehensive Plan following guidance and requirements from the Growth Management Act (GMA) and the Department of Commerce.

To accomplish this work, we have also considered the City's history, goals, and recent developments together with adopted materials such as Ordinances and Resolutions that we consulted. We recommend that you include this memo with the initial draft in the Planning Commission's packet for their review.

Overall, we have rewritten the context and frameworks behind the City's Utilities Element, as well as individual components of the Element, to provide more extensive detail compared to the 2017 Plan. Consistent with our approach to providing preliminary drafts of other Elements, we have shown tracked changes for the Goals / Policy portions only. The following list summarizes the updates we made to the Draft Utilities Element:

- The Introduction section is more complete and touches on the City' utility assets, adopted management plans and services provided by outside entities.
- We have added clarification of Growth Management Act (GMA) requirements, including an overview of specific requirements for the Utilities Element; much of this information is presented in graphical form to make the Element more interesting and visually appealing.
- We have also added new, updated mapping products using the City's GIS data.
- Projects listed reflect recent or currently planned improvements (replacing outdated information.
- Summaries of the City's individual utility assets now precede the section addressing Goals and Policies, and each of these summaries has been expanded to detail Existing Conditions, Level of Service, Future Deficiencies, Current or Recent Projects, and Recommendations. These detailed summaries replace the summaries that are found at the end of the 2017 Element. Other improvements include:
 - "Water Supply System" has been divided into two detailed parts titled "Potable Water" and "City Irrigation Water."
 - "Wastewater Supply" has been expanded and retitled "Sanitary Sewer".
 - "Storm Water System" has been expanded and retitled "Stormwater".
 - "Energy" has been expanded and retitled "Energy Service – Electricity".
 - "Other Agency Utilities" has been expanded and retitled "Utilities Provided by Other Agencies" and clarification has been added to the summary of irrigation services provided by other agencies as compared to City-owned irrigation services, detailed within the "City Irrigation Water" subsection.



In addition, the following proposed changes are shown for the Goals & Policies within the Utilities Plan, in addition to basic “wordsmithing” and general edits:

- For Goal U1, policy U.1d is proposed to add the specific infrastructure framework for advanced technology connections that the City is striving for, such as competitive broadband service. This is not a statement that is required by the GMA, but rather is a suggested addition to meet local objectives and needs.
- Proposed policy U.1e and U.1f are proposed for addition, to cover basic requirements of new developments and to address potential shortfalls.
- Under Goal U2, The final policy about cooperating with other utility providers is proposed for deletion as staff has noted that the City intends to be the electrical service provider within the City limits and UGA as necessary. This is consistent with the agreements already in place with BPUD and BREA. The number U.2e will be changed to correspond with a new policy addressing cost recovery (and specifically latecomer fees) for developers that invest in the utilities in the City.
- Proposed policies U.3c and U.3d detail the specific environmental contexts of groundwater and irrigation practices respectively as they relate to utility service. Policy U.3c (new) is required by the GMA at RCW 36.70A.070(1).
- Proposed policy U.3d contains a policy statement that is not required by the GMA, but it is a statement that sets the stage for how development should occur with irrigation water (not potable water) for groundskeeping purposes where feasible; this is in fact already a requirement at RMC 18.16.080.
- Policies U3.e through U3.h are proposed to be added, to reflect best practices and typical measures (and are not generally “required” although they may reflect requirements that cities must adhere to outside of the GMA).
- Proposed policy U.4c establishes an expectation that Best Management Practices will be applied in an effort to reduce runoff, which connects to Ecology rules and requirements. proposed policy U.4c is not required by the GMA,
- Proposed policy U.4d addresses coordination with Ecology and with Tribes
- Proposed policy U.4e is rather general in nature, talking about leakage of water systems which are a problem with respect to resource conservation.
- Policy U5.a is proposed to be added, stating that the city should cooperate with outside utility purveyors when development occurs.

The above list is provided to supply and record a rationale/ purpose for key changes, in lieu of providing comments in the document itself.

Also of note, the AHBL team reviewed the City’s Strategic Plan for anything that should additionally be added for alignment with that plan, but nothing was found that wasn’t already covered.

Finally, we are curious to know if the Planning Commission think there should be any discussion / policy about water rights? If so desired, we can provide some options / draft language.

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