

## Chapter 11 – Private Utilities

### Introduction

The Private Utilities element is intended to ensure that the *Plan* is coordinated with the expansion plans of private utility providers.

### Policy and Regulatory Context

#### *Growth Management Act*

The GMA requires that Battle Ground's *Plan* include a Private Utilities Element to ensure that provision of private utilities services is coordinated with City plans. The GMA requires that the Private Utilities Element describes the general and proposed locations, and capacities of all existing and proposed utilities. This includes, but not limited to electrical lines, telecommunications lines, and natural gas lines. GMA also requires that Battle Ground coordinate with non-municipal service providers and share information regarding existing and projected facilities and services. One statewide planning goal established by the GMA relevant to the Private Utilities Element follows:

- Public facilities and services - Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards.

### Countywide Planning Policies

The Clark County Comprehensive Growth Management Plan establishes one goal related to the Private Utilities Element:

- Facilitate the provision of electricity, natural gas and other services to the residents of Clark County.

### Private Utilities Goals and Objectives

#### Private Utilities Goal 1:

*The adequate, appropriate and timely provision of private utilities.*

#### Objectives

PUO1.1 The City will work with electric utilities to ensure the adequate, appropriate and timely provision of electricity.

PUO1.2 The City will work with gas utilities to ensure the adequate, appropriate and timely provision of gas.

PUO1.3 The City will work with telecommunications utilities to ensure the adequate, appropriate and timely provision of telecommunications.

PU01.4 The City will work with garbage and recycling haulers to ensure the adequate, appropriate and timely provision of waste and recycling removal services.

PU01.5 The City will work with cellular telecommunications providers to promote improved visual and aesthetic qualities of cellular towers through co-location and design that blends with the surrounding context.

### **Private Utilities Goal 2:**

*Good stewardship of rights-of-way.*

#### **Objectives**

PU02.1 The City will issue franchises for use of the public right-of-way when appropriate.

PU02.2 The City will encourage private utilities to bury underground any infrastructure located in public right-of-ways to promote improvement of visual and aesthetic qualities and reliability

#### **Existing Conditions**

Several private and quasi-public utility companies provide service to Battle Ground residents and businesses. Public right-of-way is used extensively in siting utility infrastructure. The City of Battle Ground currently makes every effort to inform utility providers when changes to right-of-way are made or before new development is finalized, in order to ensure that utility providers are able to install infrastructure cost effectively and with little disruption to residents. The City of Battle Ground currently has the right to exact franchise fees from utility providers for the use of public rights-of-way in the city.

It must be noted that the utility providers discussed in this element are subject to change, and other companies or entities may provide utility service to Battle Ground in the future.

#### **Electricity**

Clark Public Utilities (CPU) is a customer-owned public utility district providing electric service to Battle Ground and the rest of Clark County. About half of the power that the utility sells to its customers is generated at the River Road Generating Plant, a natural gas power plant. CPU also purchases power, from the Bonneville Power Administration.

Clark Public Utilities operates four electric substations: the Heisson, Heye Meyer, Battle Ground, and Axford substations. These substations have excess existing capacity to serve most areas of the Battle Ground UGA. Transmission facilities are located throughout the city, including in public rights-of-way.

#### **Telecommunications**

Telecommunications infrastructure is provided to Battle Ground residents by Qwest Communications. Recent changes in federal telecommunication regulations require telecommunications infrastructure providers to allow third-party companies to access their facilities, and provide service to customers. These regulations have resulted in increasing competition between providers, and innovation in the industry. Battle Ground residents can now receive a broad array of telecommunications services including telephone, and Internet services through a Digital Subscriber Line (DSL), T1, or an Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) line. Digital cellular telephone network service is also available in Battle Ground.

Qwest Communications operates copper and fiber optic cables to provide service to Battle Ground consumers. Several electronic cabinets are used to switch digital and analog telephone traffic, which are located in the rural areas surrounding Battle Ground. Qwest Communications currently plans to install new switching cabinets to provide additional service to rural areas near Battle Ground. Transmission facilities are located throughout the city, including in public rights-of-way.

### **Cable Television**

The Comcast Corporation provides cable television and other telecommunications services in Battle Ground. Comcast currently offers analog cable television, digital cable television, digital telephone service, Internet service, and movies-on-demand in Battle Ground. Comcast operates coaxial and fiber optic cable infrastructure throughout the city.

### **Garbage and Recycling**

Solid waste management within Battle Ground is handled by Waste Connections, a private contractor. Battle Ground deferred contracting authority for garbage and recycling services to the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC), which, in turn, contracted with Waste Connections. Waste Connections hauls solid waste to the Central Transfer and Recycling Center of the West Van Materials Recovery Center (West Van) in Clark County for further processing and recovery of recyclable materials. Non-recyclable waste is transported to the Finely Buttes Landfill in Morrow County, Oregon for final disposal. The Columbia Resource Center (CRC) operates the transfer facilities, landfill, and transportation of solid waste.

### **Natural Gas**

NW Natural is the sole provider of natural gas services within Battle Ground, and the rest of Clark County. NW Natural's customer base has grown rapidly over the past 10 years, reflecting the increases in Battle Ground's residential population, and an apparently strong preference by builders for providing natural gas space and hot water heating in new homes. NW Natural operates the Battle Ground Gate Station, which is located at NW 199th Avenue and SR 503. The Battle Ground Gate Station feeds gas into Battle Ground from the Williams Pipeline. NW Natural also operates a line connected to the North Vancouver Gate Station, which is tied into the Battle Ground system.

Transmission facilities are located throughout the city, including in public right-of-ways. Williams Pipeline transports gas to NW Natural's Battle Ground system. Williams Pipeline operates a facility that traverses the western area of Battle Ground diagonally from northwest to southeast.

## **Analysis and Projections**

This section provides an analysis of current utility providers' ability to accommodate future development within Battle Ground.

### **Electricity**

CPU recently analyzed its ability to supply anticipated residential, industrial, and commercial development with the existing infrastructure. The utility found that there was room to grow in most areas, with the exception of industrial and residential areas in the southwest corner of the city. CPU can add additional capacity in Battle Ground, and will levy System Development Charges (SDCs) to help fund the expansion of the electric system. For any new substation or feeder development, CPU will require secure funding commitments from future customers and/or developers.

CPU routinely monitors Battle Ground development plans to assess infrastructure expansion needs. CPU is required by state law to provide electricity to all who request it. Additional distribution lines and ancillary infrastructure will be constructed on an as-needed basis in accordance with local, state, and federal regulations and codes.

### **Telecommunications**

Qwest Communications will continually update its two-year and five-year telecommunications infrastructure plans for Battle Ground. Qwest Communications will develop additional fiber optic and copper cable infrastructure on an as-needed basis. Furthermore, Qwest Communications will increase the availability of DSL services to meet growing demands for high-speed Internet services. It is anticipated that additional cellular towers will be installed in the future as demand for service increases and as new technologies are developed.

Providing for tower co-location and improved aesthetic design will become increasingly important to maintain Battle Ground's visual and aesthetic qualities.

### **Cable Television**

The Comcast Corporation will provide additional coaxial and fiber optic cable infrastructure on an as-needed basis.

### **Garbage and Recycling**

Waste Connections will provide additional solid waste collection routes on an as-needed basis.

### **Natural Gas**

NW Natural anticipates strong growth in residential service additions as the population increases in Battle Ground, and is planning for future infrastructure construction and maintenance to serve that expected need. NW Natural routinely monitors Battle Ground development plans to assess infrastructure expansion needs. Additional distribution lines and ancillary infrastructure will be constructed on an as-needed basis in accordance with local, state, and federal regulations and codes covering land use and safety issues.

### **Findings:**

Private utility operators will continue to expand their infrastructure systems to service new development on an as-needed basis. Battle Ground will routinely provide up-to-date information on development plans, including plans for public infrastructure expansion. Good communication between the City and private utility operators will ensure that new development receives adequate services in a cost-effective manner. The City of Battle Ground will exact franchise fees from private and quasi-public utility providers for the use of public right-of-way, as appropriate. The City of Battle Ground should work with owners of cellular towers to encourage co-location and improved aesthetic design of infrastructure.