



TOWN COUNCIL AGENDA

July 22, 2025, 5:00 p.m.

Maple Hall

204 Commercial Street

Skagit County Washington
Incorporated 1890
www.townoflaconner.org

NOTICE OF AND CALL FOR A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE LA CONNER TOWN COUNCIL

DATE: Tuesday, July 22, 2025
TIME: 5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

THIS MEETING WILL BE IN PERSON ONLY
NO LIVE STREAM OR RECORDING

The undersigned Mayor of the Town of La Conner is hereby calling for and providing notice of a special meeting in accordance with RCW 42.30.080.

AGENDA

The purpose of this meeting is for:

- 1) Strategic Planning
- 2) 2026 Budget Discussions

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marna Hanneman".

Marna Hanneman, Mayor

This notice will be posted on the Town Website, Town Hall and emailed to the Skagit Valley Herald on July 21, 2025.

Distribution:

Councilmembers: Annie Taylor
Ivan Carlson
Rick Dole
Marylee Chamberlain
Mary Wohleb



Town of La Conner

Strategic Plan 2024 – 2028

July, 2025 Progress



 **BERK**

Introduction and Purpose

Welcome to the Town of La Conner's Strategic Plan! Like many communities, La Conner is in a period of transition. Regional growth brings many short- and long-term opportunities and challenges, and as a small community, we recognize that we can't "do it all." Given these real-world constraints, this Strategic Plan describes our desired future and how we will focus our efforts over the coming five years, reflecting what we've heard from the community about what matters most.

The Implementation Framework described in this document will guide an ongoing conversation among Councilmembers, staff, and community members to ensure that decision-making throughout the next five years is grounded in the ideas identified in this Plan.

Our Desired Future

Our desired future for La Conner as a community and as a Town government emphasizes its current strengths as a welcoming, small community and expands the affordability and inclusivity of our town. We envision the future of La Conner as:

Welcoming and affordable to all ages. We seek to cultivate a community that is inviting, affordable, and safe for people at all stages of life, including children, young families, and older adults.

Safe and supportive. La Conner residents know their neighbors, and we seek to preserve a safe and supportive community for all residents and visitors.

Balanced. We welcome both newcomers and our long-term residents and seek a balance between growth and maintaining what we love about our community.

Vibrant and authentic. We aim to maintain our identity as a lively small town with a strong community feel. We strive to cultivate a community of neighborhoods that offer meaningful activities and uses for residents and visitors alike.

Engaged and collaborative. We seek to engage our community members in decision-making and volunteer opportunities, and we seek partnerships and opportunities to support our local businesses and industry.

Self-reliant. We strive to offer resources and amenities that serve the needs of our residents and visitors and offer safe, convenient transportation to our neighboring communities for resources not available in town. In the face of a changing climate, we aim to expand our energy-efficiency and our ability to generate our own renewable energy.

Our Focus Areas

Goals, First Steps, and Priorities

The following sections describe our five Focus Areas for this Strategic Plan:

1. **A Robust, Affordable, and Inclusive Economy.** Offer an attainable cost-of-living and strong economy that support existing residents and invite new residents to call La Conner home.
2. **Public Safety.** Cultivate a safe community and a sense of safety among community members.
3. **Climate and Environmental Sustainability.** Strengthen our ability to respond to and address a changing climate.
4. **Capital Projects and Utilities.** Ensure the Town's infrastructure supports our community.
5. **An Effective Town Organization.** Support our desired future and the above goals through effective, efficient, and sustainable administration.

Each Focus Area includes multiple Goals that describe the primary efforts we will take in pursuit of our desired future. We have also identified a First Step we will take toward reaching each Goal. In recognition that we will not be able to advance all these Goals at once, we have noted which Goals we aim to advance in 2024, the next year of Strategic Plan implementation.

1. A Robust, Affordable, and Inclusive Economy

A. Facilitate increased housing diversity and affordability.

First Step: Develop and implement a Housing Strategy with a strong focus on partnerships.

This task has been completed with the adoption of the Comp Plan update.

B. Leverage City plans and regulations to facilitate development in line with community desires.

First Step **2024**: Update our Comprehensive Plan, including zoning and codes.

This task has been completed.

C. Support the regional agricultural industry.

First Step: Identify appropriate roles for the Town, potentially including hosting a farmers market.

We have had an initial conversation with the port over the establishment of a market, with the food bank, and with Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland. We have also visited several local markets. These discussions and observations have led us to conclude the following:

- Getting a market started is difficult, particularly a year-round market. Farmers/vendors will not join until they believe they can make more money rather than drive to another already-established market that they already go to.

- Port can be a great partner. They have space, particularly close to downtown. However, long-term use of that space is unlikely.
- Other markets don't have seafood. This would be unique. There apparently are fishers that drive to "stops" from King County to Bellingham to sell product, and they have generated a following. The tribe's fishers and oyster growers are conveniently located.
- A market needs something else. The Ag community produces a lot of grains in Skagit, because of WSU. There are two flour mills. There is a bread lab. There are brewers and distillers. Entertainment/music may be an added draw.
- Long term, should work on an anchor such as a restaurant. Short term, convenience food.
- The farmers markets currently in operation in Skagit include the following:
 - Anacortes Farmers Market - Saturdays 9-2, from May- Oct and Winter Markets on the second Saturday of the month – Jan, Feb, Mar and Apr.
 - Alger Market - Sundays from July – September, from 11-4.
 - Concrete Saturday Market - Saturdays 10-2 from Memorial Day to Labor Day.
 - Eagle Haven Market - Sundays 11-4 from Mid-May to Mid-October (live music from 1-3) at Eagle Haven Winery outside of Sedro Woolley.
 - Mount Vernon Farmers Market - Saturdays 9-2 from Mid-May to Mid-October.
 - Sedro Woolley Farmers Market – Wednesday 3-7 p.m. from mid-May to mid-October. Music each evening.
 - Skagit Valley Farmers Market at the Vinery – Sundays 10-2 from the end of May through Labor Day, next to Christianson's Nursery.

D. Partner with the Port of Skagit to develop Port-owned properties.

First Step: Expand our engagement and partnership with Port Commissioners.

We continue to work with the Port on this topic.

E. Create an Economic Development Plan.

La Conner's comp plan update included modest revisions to the economic development element. In addition, the Skagit Council of Governments updated the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy ("CEDS") in 2024. While CEDS is county-wide, it does provide a stepping-stone for future plan development focused on La Conner.

F. Explore the development of an artist/farmer's market.

First Step: Identify public and private partners.

See above. We have not proceeded with plans to develop a distinct artist's market/festival at this time (other than Arts Alive! And the Birding Festival.)

2. Public Safety

A. Make needed capital investments in fire protection and prevention.

First Step 2024: Purchase a fire boat.

We have accomplished this goal.

B. Strengthen our ability to respond to natural disasters and other emergencies.

First Step: Develop a Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP).

We have accomplished this goal. Additional annexes to the CEMP are still being developed. At the same time, we are participating in the update of the Skagit County Hazard Mitigation Plan.

C. Explore opportunities for staff and the public to contribute to public safety.

First Step 2025: Consider opportunities for volunteers to support public safety efforts.

The Emergency Management Commission has taken the following steps:

- Developed Neighborhood Mapping as a means of encouraging neighborhoods to be self-sufficient during disasters;
- Provided information/training on disaster preparation;
- Worked with the La Conner School District to involve youth in a disaster preparation insert in the local newspaper.

D. Plan for the replacement of the town's first-out fire engine.

First Step: Define the attributes of a replacement engine.

We have not pursued this goal at this time.

3. Climate and Environmental Sustainability

A. Develop and implement plans for climate resiliency.

First Step 2024: Create a climate resiliency element of the Comprehensive Plan, including hydrology modeling.

We have accomplished the goal of creating new climate element of the comprehensive plan, but without hydrology. We are looking into community partnerships and grant opportunities to engage with experts. We have also prepared a greenhouse gas policy.

B. Pursue opportunities for energy self-reliance by investing in sustainable and renewable energy.

First Step 2025: Identify opportunities to invest in solar demonstration projects.

4. Capital Projects and Utilities

A. Improve mobility and safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers, especially in our downtown district and on Maple Ave.

First Step 2024: Identify engineering and grant opportunities for 1st St Right of Way projects.

With the completion of the Moore Clark plan, we are looking at grant opportunities for engineering costs.

B. Ensure the long-term sustainability of the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

First Step 2024: Study next steps for needed improvements.

The preliminary engineering study of the WWTP will be completed later this year. The study will provide a preliminary estimate of costs, and options to upgrade the plant. The next step will

be to examine the options and consult the Swinomish Tribe and Shelter Bay to determine if they are interested in negotiating an agreement, and negotiating an agreement if they are.

C. Determine the best future for our Public Works shop.

First Step **2024**: Evaluate opportunities for collaboration with the Port of Skagit or a potential merger of our Public Works departments. Identify a site for a shop, potentially collocated with a partner.

We have had initial conversations with the Port, who has expressed interest in exploring options. The Port has identified a potential site on Port property. The next step will be to conduct a needs study, to determine how much space town operations will require in the future.

D. Explore options for the reduction of building maintenance costs.

First Step: Consider moving town offices to Maple Center.

We have not moved forward with this proposal.

5. An Effective Town Organization

A. Enhance community engagement and communications.

First Step: Study other Towns' models of engagement. Consider listening sessions, social media engagement, engagement by existing channels, and enhanced opportunities for direct engagement with Councilmembers.

We have made little progress on this goal. We have adopted a social media policy and implemented a Facebook page, primarily to share announcements. The Mayor has hosted a quarterly Saturday coffee to meet with residents.

B. Recruit and retain highly skilled staff.

First Step **2024**: Engage consultant support to conduct a salary review and develop career paths.

Prior to the 2025 budget, the Town conducted an internal salary study and implemented the results of that study. We have developed career paths for two positions, and continue to work with the Teamsters to do so.

The next step is to prepare for the recruitment of several critical positions.

C. Improve interdepartmental communications and cooperation.

First Step **2025**: Begin use of the asset management program.

We are in the process of implementing the asset management program.

Our next two steps are to establish common goals for multiple departments; and create more opportunities for casual employee interactions.

D. Support Town financial sustainability.

First Step: Engage a grant writer.

We have proceeded to hire a grant writer. Council adopted a grant policy, and we have relied on consultants to identify grant opportunities for significant projects.

E. Partner with other organizations to sponsor a new community event.

First Step: Identify potential events that would be attractive to residents and visitors.

We have worked with the chamber of commerce to enhance existing events.

Implementation Framework

This Strategic Plan will serve as a reference to guide our efforts over the coming five years. Each year during the life of this Plan, we will develop a workplan to operationalize the ideas outlined in this document. The process outlined below describes this annual process.

Throughout the lifetime of this plan, we'll engage our partners and community members to ensure all stakeholders are aware of our priorities and opportunities to engage. And we will ensure other planning opportunities such as the 2025 update to our Comprehensive Plan will align with and draw from this strategic plan.

Annual Implementation Process



Source: BERK, 2023.