Agenda
Planning Commission Meeting
Wednesday, April 22, 2026
Richland City Hall - Council Chambers
625 Swift Boulevard

Regular Meeting - 6:00 p.m.

Welcome and Roll Call

Approval of Agenda (Approved by Motion)

Approval of Minutes (Approved by Motion)

1. Approval of the March 25, 2026 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
   - Shairra Rahseparian, Administrative Assistant II

Public Comments: Please limit public comments to 2 minutes. The public comment period is not an opportunity for dialogue with the Planning Commission, or for posing questions with the expectation of an immediate answer. Many questions require an opportunity for information-gathering and deliberation. For this reason, the Planning Commission will accept comments, but will not directly respond to comments, questions or concerns during public comment. Records intended for the Planning Commission's consideration must be submitted to the Planning Manager by 4:00 p.m. the day of the meeting for distribution.

New Business None

2. Comprehensive Plan Update - Natural Environment Element and Parks and Recreation Element Discussion
   - Nicole Stickney
     AHBL

Communications

Adjournment

This meeting will be broadcast live on CityView Channel 192 on the City's website and on the City's YouTube Channel.

Richland City Hall is ADA accessible. Any individual who has difficulty attending the meeting in-person may request to provide comments remotely. (RCW Ch. 42.30) Requests for sign interpreters, audio equipment, and/or other special services must be received 48 hours prior to the meeting by calling the City Clerk's Office at 509-942-7389.

PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVERSHEET

Meeting Date: 4/22/2026 Agenda Category: Approval of Minutes

Prepared By: Shairra Rahseparian, Administrative Assistant II

Subject
Approval of the March 25, 2026 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

Strategic Priority
Strategic Priority 1 - High Performance Government

Recommended Motion
Approve the minutes of the Planning Commission meeting held on March 25, 2026.

Summary
Draft meeting minutes for the March 25, 2026 Planning Commission Meeting are attached for review and consideration.

Attachments
1. 2026.03.25 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes - DRAFT

DRAFT

MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 2026
Richland City Hall – Council Chambers
625 Swift Boulevard

Planning Commission Meeting - 6:00 p.m.

Chair Richardson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Welcome and Roll Call:

Attendance:	Member Anderson	Present
	Member Leonard	Absent
	Member Nicholson	Present
	Chair Richardson	Present
	Vice-Chair Lambert	Present
	Member Hernandez	Present

Also present were Councilmember Samuel, Development Services Director Rizzitiello, Planning Manager Stevens, Planner Nelson, Planner Ballard and Administrative Assistant II Rahseparian.

Approval of Agenda:

VICE-CHAIR LAMBERT MOVED AND COMMISSION MEMBER NICHOLSON SECONDED THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS PUBLISHED. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.

Approval of Minutes:

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes for January 28, 2026, Planning Commission Meeting, and March 11, 2026, Planning Commission Workshop.

COMMISSION MEMBER NICHOLSON MOVED, AND VICE-CHAIR LAMBERT SECONDED, TO APPROVE THE JANUARY 28, 2026, PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING AND MARCH 11, 2026, PLANNING COMMISSION WORKSHOP MINUTES AS PRESENTED. THE MOTION PASSED 5–0.

Public Comments:

None.

New Business:

2. Comprehensive Plan Update – Introduction and Community Vision and Climate Element Discussion

Nicole Stickney, Associate Principle with AHBL, Inc., gave a presentation to the Planning Commission covering the Draft Introduction and Community Vision and Draft Climate Element for the 2026 Comprehensive Plan Update for review and discussion. The PowerPoint presentation can be found in the agenda packet.

Discussions on the following were held:

- The growth of the community over the past twenty years
- Richland Greenhouse Gas emissions
- Economic impact related to the goals listed in the Climate Element
- Process for creating action steps for the goals listed in the Climate Element
- Vision Statement and possible updates

Nicole Stickney would like the Planning Commission to continue working on the Vision Statement.

Communication:

Senior Planner Ballard**:**

- April 8, 2026, Meeting is Canceled
- April 22, 2026 – Regular Meeting at 6:00 P.M.
- April 22, 2026 – Regular Meeting at 6:45 P.M.
- Survey for Transportation opens April 6, 2026

Adjournment:

Chair Richardson adjourned the meeting at 7:09 P.M.

PREPARED BY: _____
Shairra Rahseparian, Administrative Assistant

APPROVED BY: _____
Jet Richardson, Chair

Planning Commission AGENDA ITEM STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: 4/22/2026 Agenda Category: New Business

Prepared By: Nicole Stickney, AHBL

Subject

Comprehensive Plan Update - Natural Environment Element and Parks and Recreation Element Discussion

Department/Office	Ordinance/Resolution Number	Document Type
Development Services	360	Planning Commission Item

Recommended Motion

None.

Summary

Nicole Stickney, Associate Principal with AHBL, will present to the Planning Commission the 2026 Comprehensive Plan Update Draft Parks and Recreation Element and Draft Natural Environment element for review.

Fiscal Impact

None.

Attachments

1. Natural Resources Memo and Draft Element
2. Parks Memo and Draft Element

PROJECT MEMO

TO:	Mike Stevens, City of Richland	**DATE:**	April 6, 2026
FROM:	Nicole Stickney Pasco - (253) 383-2422	**PROJECT NO.:**	2240885.30
		PROJECT NAME:	Richland 2026 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update
SUBJECT:	Natural Environment Element Staff Report		

AHBL planners have prepared the first draft of the Natural Environment Element of the Comprehensive Plan in accordance with guidance and requirements from the Growth Management Act and the Department of Commerce.

To update the Element, we considered the city's unique history, goals, and recent developments and consulted adopted environmental materials such as Ordinances and Resolutions. We also reviewed the City's Comprehensive Plan, dated 2017, with subsequent amendments, and found a discussion about Richland's natural environment within the Land Use Element, with subsections detailing Critical Areas, Open Space, Shoreline, and Mineral Resources. For this update, we pulled the information from the Land Use Element and created a new element, focusing on a more useful and robust discussion on the included topics. This aligns with the approach we suggested at the early stages of this project.

We recommend that you include this memo with the draft (dated April 6, 2026) in the Planning Commission's meeting packet for April for their review.

When reviewing this Element, it is helpful to keep in mind that the Comprehensive Plan has other related elements: Capital Facilities, Climate, Land Use, Parks and Recreation, and Utilities. Also, we are proposing to address the topics of Wildland Urban Interface (in terms of development standards and mitigation), the City's Community Wildfire Protection Plan, and measures of environmental health (i.e. exposure to pollution and other health outcomes) in the Land Use Element.

The following list generally summarizes what we have proposed in the Natural Element draft:

- Introductory language to brief readers on the overarching reasoning and requirements behind the Natural Environment Element. This section also clarifies that goals, policies, and other information relating to climate change can be found in the separate Climate Element.
- Background information including context about Richland's location, the relationship with local tribes, and providing:
    - A brief overview of the regulatory setting addressing regulations in place to protect natural features and environmental functions including the City's Critical Areas Ordinance and the Shoreline Master Program.
    - An in-depth summary of Richland's environmental setting summarizing the most prominent natural features as well as the city's most significant parks and preserves.
    - Brief summaries covering Richland's Geography, Local Climate Characteristics, and Wildland Urban Interface.
- Explanations of the Critical Areas Ordinance as a regulatory document, Best Available Science, and the purposes of a Critical Areas report. Additionally, we included descriptions of Wetlands, Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas, Frequently Flooded Areas, and Geologically Hazardous Areas.

- A discussion of Resource Lands including the purpose of resource land designations. We added information on all resources including Mineral Resources, although the City determined in 1998 that no land within the Richland UGA should be designated as mineral resource lands.

- Incorporation of Richland's Shoreline Master Program (SMP) and a description of the Columbia River Shoreline Reconveyance effort. *As Planning Commission members may be aware, the City recently adopted a newly updated SMP. However, Ecology acceptance is still pending and the new SMP will not be in effect until Ecology finalizes its review.*

- A section covering open space expanding on the information provided in the Land Use Element. Open space will continue to be addressed in the Land Use element in a slightly different context.

- A new section on air and water quality summarizing the benefits of a quality environment and explaining the science behind measuring the quality of air and water. We have provided further details on aquifer recharge, groundwater (including nitrate contamination), and water quality protection measures.

- Another new section detailing concepts of Urban Forestry and the benefits of managing trees in a cohesive way. It is worth noting that a tree canopy study was recently conducted, supporting content in both the Natural Environment and Climate Elements. It is our understanding that Richland does not presently have an urban forestry plan, however.

- Lastly, a new section on sustainability summarizing the different sustainability standards that the City follows, in accordance with state law. We included further details and observations about water conservation, waste, and recycling in the Capital facilities and Utilities Elements.

The Land Use Element in the 2017 Comprehensive Plan includes discussions of the natural environment and a few related goals and policies. We incorporated this information into the new Natural Environment Element and expanded the goals and policies to reflect the City's aim to protect natural features while providing quality spaces and resources for residents and visitors. The following list contains brief summaries of each goal and select policies, with the rationale or purpose for proposed changes or additions:

- For Goal NE.1, we propose to expand upon the existing goal related to the natural environment in the Land Use Element that aims to protect, conserve, and restore natural areas.

    - We propose moving Policy NE.1f from the Capital Facilities Element, for better organization.

    - Policies NE.1h and NE.1j are policies from the Natural Environment section of the Land Use Element that we propose to retain.

    - We propose adding Policy NE.1l regarding the implementation of a compost procurement policy, required by the Growth Management Act. *(City of Richland ORD 2022-41 is the Compost Procurement policy).*

- We propose adding Goal NE.2 and two policies centering on wetland protection and the standard of *no net loss*.

- Proposed Goal NE.3 and its policies focus on the protection of Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas. We are proposing this goal and six related policies that prioritize environmental management such as tree planting, tree planting on City properties, the removal of invasive species, and the use of Riparian Management Zones.

- Proposed Goal NE.4 seeks to manage development within floodplains and features three related policies regarding educational efforts, stormwater conveyance, and compliance with FEMA programs.

- Goal NE.5 is a proposed goal for the protection of Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas (CARAs) and the process of ensuring safe and adequate drinking water while also promoting sustainable use of water resources. This goal features two policies focused on regulatory protection and partnerships with other agencies and community groups.

    - We will continue to monitor and assess the timing for when the City may adopt a new Water System plan which we presume will include an updated Wellhead Protection Plan and map, and those materials will be used to create a map depicting CARAs.

- We propose adding Goal NE.6 pertaining to development in and around geologically hazardous areas, with three policies relating to grading activities, erosion control, vegetation retention, and safety.

- Proposed Goal NE.7 echoes the Plan's alignment with the City's Shoreline Master Program, seeking to protect designated shoreline areas. Three proposed policies serve this goal and focus on the development of cultural and water-oriented activities along the Yakima and Columbia Rivers, and assurance of public access.

- Proposed Goal NE.8 specifies the preservation, enhancement, and expansion of the city's open and green spaces. We propose adding two policies, one of which (NE.8a) was previously included in the Capital Facilities Element and it is proposed to be moved for better organization.

- Goal NE.9 is proposed to protect and enhance water quality through policies that focus on Best Management Practices, Low-Impact Development, and other initiatives based on limiting water pollution.

- Proposed Goal NE.10 echoes NE.9, but with a focus on the protection of air quality. The associated proposed policies mention working with the Benton Clean Air Authority and considering dust abatement regulations.

MV/es

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

DRAFT FOR PLANNING COMMISSION REVIEW

(DRAFT DATE: APRIL 6, 2026)

Introduction

This Natural Environment Element, added to the Comprehensive Plan as a part of the 2026 periodic update, contains the goals and policies necessary to support the City's responsibility and desire for preserving, protecting, and enhancing the natural environment through implementing regulations, guidelines, and standards. It also addresses strategies for managing risks posed by natural hazards such as floods and wildfire. It is maintained to direct land use and City decisions and policies over the next 20 years.

The opening discussion of the Natural Environment element contains the data and background information that informs the goals and policies that follow. This element discusses natural features, environmentally critical areas, geologic hazard areas, critical aquifer recharge areas, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, flood hazard, topography and soils, local climate characteristics, hazard mitigation planning, and wildfires.

See the Climate Element of this plan for focused information and Goals / Policies related to Climate Change

Background Information

Richland is located at the confluence of the Columbia River and Yakima River, both of which flow for large stretches within city boundaries. These rivers, their shorelines, nearby islands, and Delta lowlands are the primary natural features defining the city and provide natural habitat in addition to multiple recreational opportunities for the city's residents and visitors. Numerous parks and natural open spaces such as the Tapteal Greenway and W.E. Johnson Park, also exist within the city, providing respite and natural habitat. The City recognizes these natural areas as major attractions and has a policy to preserve their functions and values. Richland also contains a substantial urban forest consisting of street trees, park trees, and private trees, providing benefits such as reduced temperatures, reduced air pollution, and enhanced property values.

A federally recognized Indian Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) is a sovereign governmental entity with an interest in the preservation, protection, and perpetuation of lands located within the city that were ceded by the Treaty of 1855. The aboriginal uses and practices on the land and the features and functions of the natural environment, including tribal knowledge, are of great value.

- In 2015, the CTUIR and the City of Richland entered into an agreement related to natural

resources and other mutual interests consistent with CTUIR's recognized Treaty Rights and the City's jurisdiction over land within its geographical boundaries. A memorandum of understanding (MOU)[1] outlines practices for information sharing, consultation, and other matters.

- Also in 2015, a Cultural Resources Protection Protocol was created, and an Inter-Tribal Advisory Board (ITAB) was established to ensure the protection of cultural resources through the identification, evaluation, and relocation for the land transferred from the Federal Government (Department of Energy) to TRIDEC at the Hanford site. Portions of the original tract of transferred land (which was approximately 1,641 acres) are now within the City of Richland limits and the agreement runs with the land[2].

REGULATORY SETTING

The natural features in Richland include critical areas that must be protected under State Law consisting of geologically hazardous areas, critical aquifer recharge areas, frequently flooded areas, wetlands, and fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas. These areas provide benefits to fish and wildlife, water quality, property, and quality of life for residents and visitors. Critical areas within Richland are regulated by the City's Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO).

The Yakima River and Columbia River shorelines within Richland are classified as Shorelines of the State and are protected under the Shoreline Management Act (1971). The primary goal of the Act is "to prevent the inherent harm in an uncoordinated and piecemeal development of the state's shorelines." The City's Shoreline Master Program (SMP) (2014) implements the State's Shoreline Management Act (SMA).

The SMP includes:

- An inventory of the natural characteristics and land use patterns along shorelines covered by the SMA;
- Shoreline development regulations;
- A permit system to further the goals and policies of both the SMA and the SMP; and
- A Restoration Plan that includes goals, policies, and actions for restoration of impaired shoreline ecological functions.

[1] Resolution 154-15
[2] Attachment A to the deed recorded under Benton County Auditor File No. 2015-029457

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Flows on the Yakima River vary, as the Yakima Project includes a reservoir system that stores natural water flow on the Yakima River and Naches River basins (upstream from Richland, and further west into the mountains) and the water is released during periods of high demand. As a result, the flows are higher than what would naturally occur in the late summer, and lower than what would naturally occur in the spring and early summer. The water quality of the Yakima River is highly affected by irrigation return flows (which can cause suspended sediment, turbidity, fecal coliform, pesticides, and nutrients while also affecting water temperature). The Yakima River channel widens as it approaches the Columbia River, and there is a mapped channel migration zone for the river.

A TOWN WITH TWO RIVERS

The mighty Columbia River flows through Richland, and links up to the Yakima River. Both of these rivers provide vital resources to the town.

Likewise, the Columbia River, also known as "Lake Wallula" is another major water resource. Lake Wallula is created as a result of impoundment of the Columbia River at McNary Dam (located south of Richland along Washington's southern border with Oregon). Water levels of the Columbia River along Richland's riverfront is generally stable and its floodplain levels are confined due to river regulation and features like levees. The Columbia River is on the Clean Water Act Section 303(d) list[3] of impaired waters, for temperatures. The Columbia River features a stable and confined channel and generally has a low risk of flooding due to the levy and dam system maintained by the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE or "the Corps").

Richland's groundwater is within the "Columbia Plateau" aquifer system and consists of Basalt overlain by quaternary flood deposits. The groundwater is hydraulically connected to surface water; therefore, the amount of groundwater pumping affects surface water stream flow and groundwater is accordingly recharged by surface water.

Next, Richland's natural open space system includes most of the Yakima River and Columbia River shorelines and islands within city boundaries.

City-owned W.E. Johnson Park includes about 236 acres located south of Van Giesen Street including mostly natural open space with about a half mile of Yakima River frontage; the Corps owns Chamna Natural Preserve, an approximately 276 acre park located on the left bank of the river between the I-182 bridge and SR 240; the Riverview Preserve is a 268-acre area owned and managed by the Corps on the right bank of the Yakima River; Bateman Island is a 160-acre islet in the Yakima River Delta under Corps ownership and leased to the City. Columbia Point South Park is a largely undeveloped area of 230 acres located north of Bateman Island at the confluence of the

[3] The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approves the Section 303(d) list, which is prepared by the State of Washington, on a biennial basis

Yakima River and the Columbia River.

Other natural features include the prominent ridges in the south Richland area. These ridges have been considered for potential acquisition by the City in order to preserve views, protect shrub-steppe habitat, and provide public access.

GEOGRAPHY

Located in the geographic region known as the Mid-Columbia Basin, Richland is generally flat but with gently sloping areas in the southern portion of the city, rising toward Badger Mountain, just outside the city's southwestern border. The city is bisected by the Yakima River, which generally flows northwest to southeast through Richland, and opens into a delta area where it flows into the Columbia River. The delta area consists of lowlands and a number of islands, the largest of which is Bateman Island. The Columbia River forms the eastern border of the city, with a significant portion of its width contained within the city boundary.

The segments of the Yakima and Columbia Rivers around Richland are located in a wide valley that is comprised primarily of alluvial soils with relatively high infiltration rates. Within upland areas, particularly areas farther from the confluence of the river, deposits of gravel also occur.

Land cover in Richand is dominated by developed areas and shrub/scrub habitat in natural or undisturbed locations, with agricultural uses in some locations.

LOCAL CLIMATE CHARACTERISTICS

The Central Basin region of Washington, where the city is situated, has the lowest precipitation rates within Washington state. Annual precipitation in the Richland area averages around 7.15 inches and precipitation is commonly associated with summer thunderstorms and winter rains and snowfall. Snowfall depths rarely exceed 2 to 3 inches and generally occur from November to March. High temperatures in January can range from 35 to 45 degrees Fahrenheit (1.6 to 7.2 degrees Celsius) with low temperatures between 20 to 30 degrees (-6.7 to -1.1 degrees Celsius). Summer high temperatures are usually in the high 80s to low 90s with low temperatures in the high 50s.

The area is known for being quite windy at certain times of the year, with wind directions and speeds varying through the seasons. The predominant wind direction is Southwest to South; April is typically the windiest month with an average windspeed of 8.3 mph. Wind gusts during storm events can be fierce and strong (up to 30 and even 40 mph), and negatively affect air quality when dust is carried by the winds.

For safety and comfort, the possibility of strong (although infrequent) wind gusts should be taken into consideration. For example, roofs and light structures need to be oriented and designed to withstand the occasional wind guests and temporary structures should be anchored or otherwise reinforced to prevent damage. Landscaping and barriers can provide important windbreaks.

WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE

The Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) can be thought of as a zone where natural areas and development meet. This is where the possible threat of wildfires on structures is increased due to the proximity of fire-prone vegetation near the structures.

Climate conditions, weather patterns, topography, hydrology, and development conditions all contribute to the set of conditions that can increase potential threat of catastrophic events. Through implementation of land use and related land development policies and regulations, the City can support mitigation, particularly where firefighting (or suppression) systems may be limited.

Richland is often subject to hot and dry winds that create ideal wildland fire conditions, resulting in frequent Red Flag warnings. Lightning strikes can also result in wildland fires.

Measures to address these factors are discussed further in the Land Use Element.

Critical Areas

Richland's environmental critical areas include wetlands, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, frequently flooded areas, geologically hazardous areas, and critical aquifer recharge areas. When protected, critical areas provide a number of benefits such as safeguarding clean water, reducing flooding and other natural disaster risks, preserving biodiversity, and ensuring long-term community resilience and environmental sustainability. Critical areas are regulated by the Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO), Chapter 22.10 of Title 22 in the Richland Municipal Code.

The City uses Best Available Science (BAS) in developing policies and development regulations to protect the functions and values of critical areas and give special consideration to conservation or protection measures. BAS is used to ensure that policies, regulations, and planning decisions – especially those that involve environmental protection, public health, and natural resource management – are based on reliable scientific evidence rather than opinion to reduce risk, improve outcomes, increase accountability, and support defensible decision-making. The BAS process involves adopting information from local, state, or federal natural resource agencies that are appropriate for local circumstances; consulting with a qualified scientific expert or team to assess applicability to the local critical area; and determining if a person is a qualified scientific expert.

Critical Area reports are required to be completed for development proposals and permits, unless waived. The reports determine the extent and function of critical areas where regulated activities are proposed. The reports are used to determine mitigation requirements, and there is an official process used to minimize or manage adverse impacts to critical areas known as "mitigation sequencing". Mitigation sequencing is a hierarchical process which is intended to ensure no net loss of critical area functions resulting from a particular action such as development[4].

[4] WAC 197-11-768

The Critical Areas Map (Fig. LU-4) indicates the general locations and extents of wetlands, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, critical aquifer recharge areas, and geologically hazardous areas that are located within Richland.

WETLANDS

Wetlands are areas where water covers the soil or remains at or near the surface for all or part of the year. Prolonged saturation shapes the development of hydric soils and influences the types of flora and fauna communities that inhabit them. As a result, wetlands often support aquatic and terrestrial plant and animal species. Wetlands ecosystems serve a number of important beneficial functions. They provide wildlife habitat, help maintain water quality, store and convey storm water and floodwater, recharge groundwater, and store carbon to reduce greenhouse gases. In addition to environmental benefits, wetlands serve as areas for recreation, educational and scientific study, and aesthetic appreciation. Wetlands are protected by "buffers" which are protected areas adjacent to wetlands that local governments must regulate in order to preserve wetland functions and values. Biologists and other trained individuals delineate wetlands (measuring them and determining the boundaries) in the field, and also rate wetlands according to standard practices, determining the protective buffers sizing.

CRITICAL AREA MAPS

Mapping of critical areas is inherently approximate and must always be verified in the field. Features such as wetlands can shift over time—their shape, size, and ecological functions may change. Similarly, habitat areas for fish and wildlife are dynamic and can vary from year to year. Because of this, on-site confirmation is essential.

In contrast, features like floodways, steep slopes, and critical aquifer recharge areas (such as wellhead protection zones) tend to remain more stable. Even so, maps remain valuable tools for identifying likely critical areas and for documenting locations where critical areas have been confirmed.

Wetlands in Richland are primarily found along the Yakima and Columbia River corridors, the Chamna Natural Preserve, Amon Creek Natural Preserve, W.E. Johnson Park, and occur in other low-lying, wet areas of the city. (See Figure X for approximate locations)

FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT CONSERVATION AREAS

Fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas are areas identified as being of critical importance for maintaining flora and fauna species diversity; providing opportunities for food, cover, nesting, breeding, and movement for fish and wildlife.

Fish and wildlife habitat areas also serve as areas for recreation, educational and scientific study, and aesthetic appreciation while helping to maintain air and water quality, controlling erosion, and providing neighborhood separation and visual diversity within urban areas.

Riparian areas are transitional zones between aquatic and terrestrial environments. They are found

along the edges of rivers, creeks, and other bodies of water, and they typically host vegetation that is adapted to periodic flooding and moist soil conditions. Riparian areas are important habitat locations.

The city is located within the Pacific Flyway, a migratory bird route that extends from Alaska to South America. A diverse range of bird species use Richland's wetlands, rivers, and other natural areas to rest and feed each year.

Shrubsteppe is a unique vegetation type that is present in and around Richland. According to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, shrubsteppe, an arid ecosystem, provides habitat for species found nowhere else in the state. WDFW notes that the pressures of development, agriculture, and other impacts such as invasive species have threatened this type of habitat and it's worth protecting shrubsteppe from further decline and degradation.

The GMA requires cities to protect priority species and habitats, as listed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the City, and any threatened or endangered species listed under the Federal Endangered Species Act. The City's municipal code describes how an area is determined to be a regulated "Fish and wildlife habitat conservation area."

FREQUENTLY FLOODED AREAS

Frequently flooded areas are lands that are subject to recurring flooding from rivers, streams, lakes, or stormwater runoff. In Richland, these areas include floodplains ("100-year" flood zones designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Flood Insurance Program) and channel migration zones (CMZs). Within Richland's UGA and outside of the city, the Columbia and Yakima Rivers and the adjacent land areas are designated as floodways (also flood zones designated by FEMA and the National Flood Insurance Program).

Floodplains and other areas subject to recurring flooding perform important hydrologic functions such as maintaining natural floodwater storage functions and are designated to reduce risks to people and property. Development in these areas is typically limited or subject to special standards to minimize flood hazards.

Frequently flooded areas in Richland primarily occur in lowland areas adjacent to and near the Yakima River and other areas subject to being submerged in water. (See Figure NE-1 for approximate locations.)

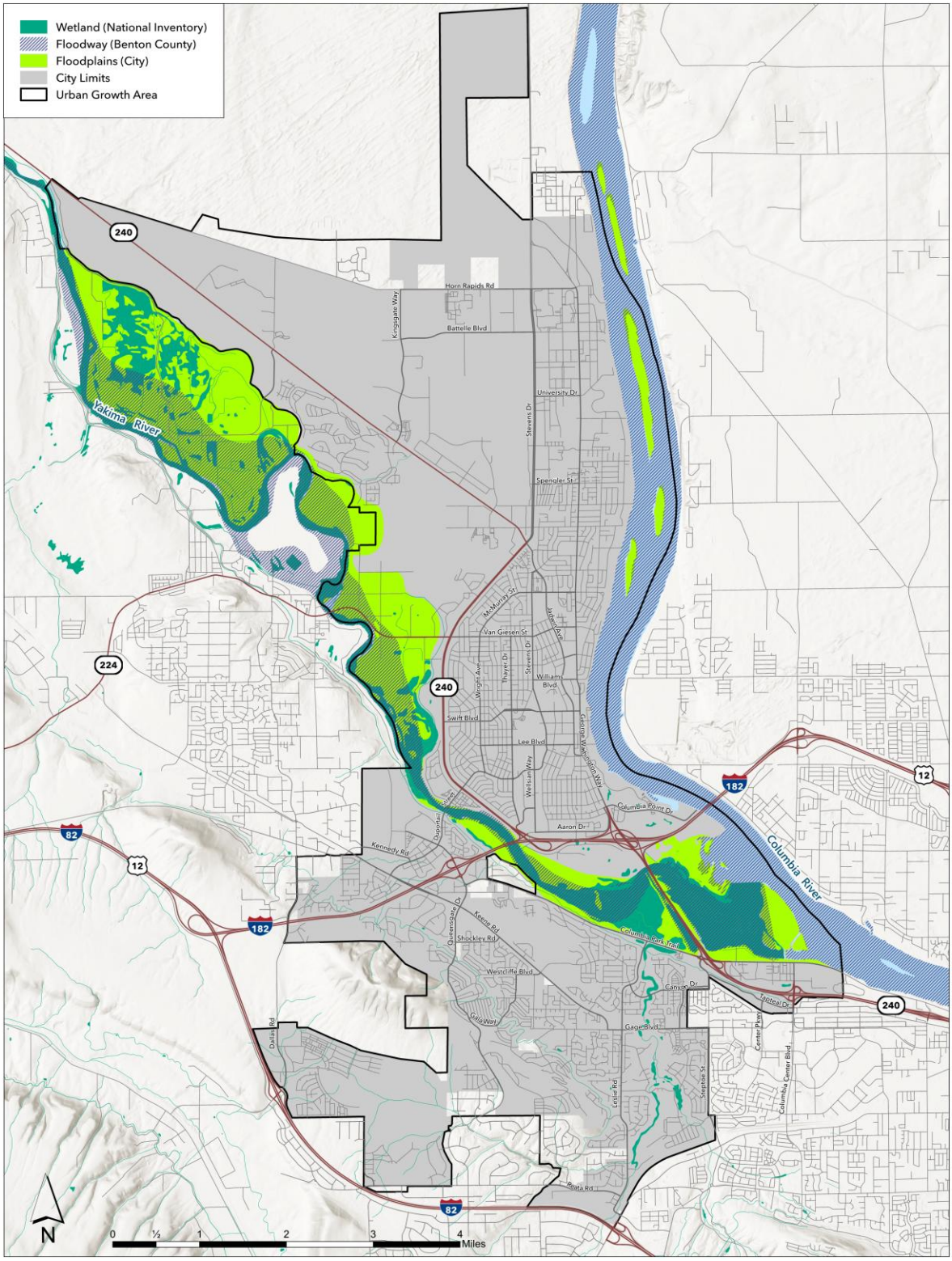

Figure NE-1: Wetlands and Frequently Flooded Areas

CRITICAL AQUIFER RECHARGE AREAS

Critical aquifer recharge areas, commonly referred to as CARAs, are defined as those areas having a critical recharging effect on aquifer use for potable water in community systems. CARAs include areas where an aquifer that is a source of drinking water is vulnerable to contamination that would affect the potability of water, or is susceptible to reduced recharge. They consist primarily of wellhead protection areas, delineated as areas where contamination in the aquifer could reach a well within a specified period of time, and are associated with City water supplies. Protection of these areas is intended to protect public health and safety, prevent degradation of ground water supplies, and control risks to the degradation of ground water quality and quantity.

There are CARAs delineated within the boundaries of Richland which include five-year and ten-year time-of-travel zones. Richland's CARAs are distributed across the city in various locations and vary in size depending on where groundwater occurs, where it is moving, and how fast.

GEOLOGICALLY HAZARDOUS AREAS

Areas characterized by geologic hazards posing a risk to public and private property and human life and safety must be considered. Geologically hazardous areas include areas susceptible to mass wasting (i.e. landslide), erosion, or seismic activity. Because of this susceptibility, these areas may not be suitable for new development. In many cases, hazards can be reduced or mitigated through engineering design or modified construction practices.

Geologically hazardous areas in Richland are situated south of the Yakima River and include portions of the prominent ridges in south Richland and areas along the Amon Creek Natural Preserve. (See Figure NE-2 for approximate locations.)

Resource Lands

Mineral resource lands are lands that are primarily devoted to the extraction of minerals or that have known or potential long- term commercial significance for the extraction of minerals. The GMA requires cities and counties to designate natural resource lands where appropriate and adopt development regulations to assure the conservation of agricultural, forest, and mineral resource lands (RCW 36.70A.060, RCW 36.70A.170). Jurisdictions need to designate mineral resource lands that are not already characterized by urban growth and that have long-term significance for the extraction of minerals. Cities and counties should classify lands with long- term commercial significance for extracting at least one of the following minerals: sand, gravel, and valuable metallic substances. Other minerals may be classified as appropriate.

The City performed a detailed analysis of its mineral resources in 1998 and determined that no lands within the Richland UGA should be designated as mineral resource lands.

The city does contain agricultural lands within its boundary as well as UGA, but none of these lands are designated as Agricultural Lands of Long Term Commercial Significance (ALLTCS).

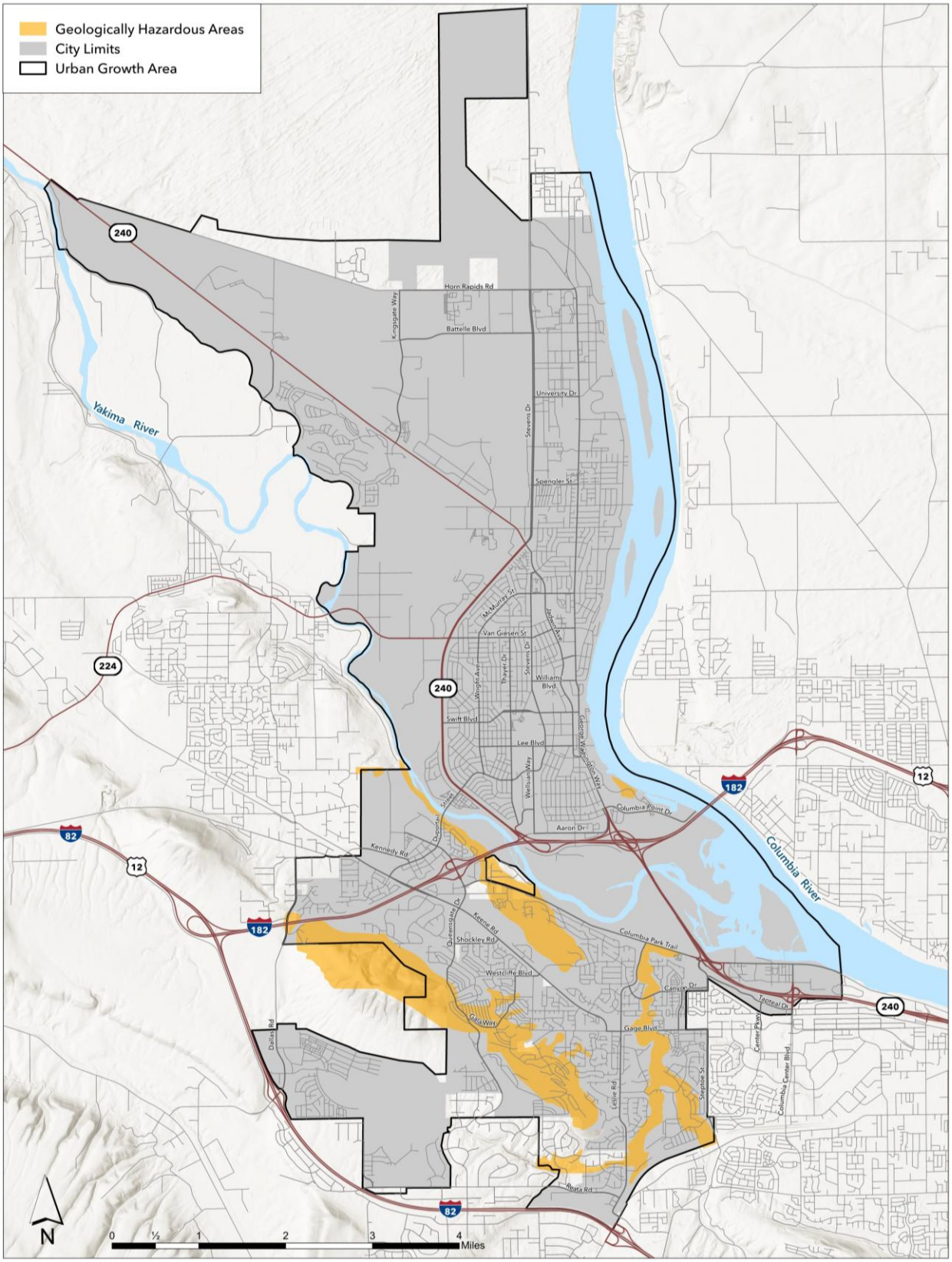

Figure NE-2: Geologically Hazardous Areas

Shoreline

SHORELINE MASTER PROGRAM (SMP)

Richland's shoreline consists of approximately 2,600 acres of land on the Columbia and Yakima Rivers. A Shoreline Master Program (SMP) was developed and adopted by Richland City Council and approved by the Department of Ecology in 2014. This Comprehensive Plan incorporates the SMP, together with the Shoreline Environments map, by reference.

The SMP aims to use and reserve Richland's shoreline for various water-oriented uses and facilities while protecting the ecological functions and cultural and historic values of the shoreline.

The SMP designates eight shoreline environments as follows:

Natural Environment	Recreation Conservancy Environment	Recreation Environment	Rural Environment
Residential Environment	Waterfront Use Environment	Industrial Conservancy	Aquatic Environment

The GMA requires that SMP goals and policies are included in the Comprehensive Plan and that they are consistent with each other. The City of Richland's SMP complies with Chapter 90.58 Revised Code of Washington (RCW), the Shoreline Management Act (SMA), and the Department of Ecology's 2003 Shoreline Master Program Guidelines (Chapter 173-26 Washington Administrative Code [WAC]).

The goals and policies of the SMP are incorporated by reference into this Comprehensive Plan.

The City prepared an Inventory and Analysis of local shoreline ecological, land use, and other resources to provide the scientific basis of the program and to establish baseline Conditions in June 2014 . The City's overall approach to shoreline use is as follows:

- The utilization of shorelines for economically productive uses that are particularly dependent on shoreline location or use.
- The utilization of shorelines and the waters they encompass for public access and recreation.
- Protection and restoration of the ecological functions of shoreline natural resources.
- Protection of the public right of navigation and corollary uses of waters of the state.
- The protection and restoration of buildings and sites having historic, cultural, and educational value.
- Planning for public facilities and utilities correlated with other shoreline uses.

- Prevention and minimization of flood damages.
- Recognizing and protecting private property rights.
- Coordination of the SMP with other relevant local, state, and federal programs.

SHORELINE RECONVEYANCE

Land ownership along many of Richland's shoreline areas (and other shorelines in the Tri Cities) may be changed. In 2026 Council formally agreed to participate in a multi-jurisdictional effort known as Columbia River Shoreline Reconveyance, led by TRIDEC. The goal of the effort is to seek reconveyance of shoreline parcels presently owned by the US Army Corps of Engineers and transfer ownership back to local governments and tribal partners. Key concepts of the effort include measures to establish conservation easements, methods to include tribal trust conveyances for selected parcels, and approving protocols related to ground-disturbing activities to protect cultural resources.

Open Space

Open space in Richland and the UGA comprises over 17 percent of the total land. These areas include natural areas (Natural Open Space) and more formally developed parks and trails (Developed Open Space) in the Land Use Map, provided in the Land Use Element of this plan.

Developed Open Space is discussed under the Parks and Recreation Sub Element under Capital Facilities.

Among other benefits, these open space areas contribute to sustaining habitat areas and maintaining migration corridors for wildlife including birds and anadromous fish.

The following discusses the natural elements of Richland's open space system, which comprises approximately nine percent of the land area within the city.

The natural open space system includes the Yakima River and Columbia River shorelines, islands, greenways, and designated areas within residential developments. It also includes environmentally sensitive areas or critical areas where development would be constrained by wetlands, geologic hazards areas, aquifer recharge areas, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, and frequently flooded areas along river or stream corridors.

The natural open spaces on or near the Yakima River include:

- The **Tapteal Greenway**, located on the lower Yakima River. It provides potential opportunities for non-motorized recreation, education, and habitat protection. The Tapteal Greenway is owned by multiple public and private entities including US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).
- The **Chamna Natural Preserve**, located on the north bank of the Yakima River. This area is owned by USACE.
- The **Riverview Preserve** is located at the confluence of the Yakima and Columbia Rivers and is owned and managed by the USACE.
- **Bateman Island** in the Yakima River Delta is owned by the USACE and leased to the City. An earthen causeway (built around the early 1940's) was removed in early 2026, eliminating easy access by footrail and restoring the previously restricted water flow. The causeway

removal restores fish passage and enhances the ecosystem, improving water quality.

- **W.E. Johnson Park** is located south of Van Giesen Street and is owned by the City of Richland.
- The **Amon Natural Preserve**, a part of the west branch of the Amon Basin is owned by the City. This area is located on the south end of the city near I-182.

On the Columbia River, natural open spaces include:

- A portion of **Leslie Groves Park** located between Snyder Street and Ferry Street.
- A portion of **Columbia Point South**; a largely undeveloped area located at the confluence of the Yakima River and the Columbia River.
- The islands on the river that are part of the **McNary National Wildlife Refuge**.

In 2004, the City worked with community groups including Friends of Badger Mountain, and several funding agencies to help Benton County acquire from willing sellers a 575-acre preserve on Badger Mountain located north of the Badger Mountain South area. The City also worked with community groups and funding agencies to purchase properties from willing sellers along the west branch of Amon Basin in order to enlarge the City-owned natural open space areas.

The Tapteal Greenway, located on the lower Yakima River, is one of Richland's most notable open space areas. The entire Greenway is a 35-mile natural corridor that runs from Kiona at Benton City to the river's confluence with the Columbia River at Bateman Island in Richland. It goes through the Chamna Natural Preserve and W.E. Johnson Park. It has been preserved as an area where wildlife, natural vegetation, and people can coexist. It provides potential opportunities for non-motorized recreation, education, and habitat protection.

The Chamna Natural Preserve is about 276 acres and is located on the north bank of the Yakima River. It is part of the Yakima River delta and is managed by the Tapteal Greenway Association. The Tapteal Greenway Association manages other lands owned by the USACE as a nature preserve with limited non-motorized access. Habitat area includes about 100 acres of upland, with 50 acres of abandoned farm fields (Anchor QEA, 2014). Riverview Preserve is a 268-acre area owned and managed by the USACE at the confluence of the Yakima and Columbia Rivers; Bateman Island is 160 acres in the Yakima River Delta under USACE ownership and leased to the City.

W.E. Johnson Park is primarily a natural open space area consisting of 236 acres. It includes approximately half of a mile of Yakima River frontage on the east of the river. It is located south of Van Giesen Street and west of the Bypass Highway.

The Amon Basin includes approximately 75 acres of City-owned open space and is located on the southeast side of the city east of Leslie Road. The Amon Basin Natural Preserve has been preserved as compensatory mitigation for the SR 240 bridge expansion project over the Yakima River delta that took place in 2005. The mitigation area includes upland and wetland habitat. Irrigation canal system operations, raised groundwater tables, and associated seepage and return flow surface in this natural drainage and run through the Amon Basin and other areas into the Yakima River near the confluence with the Columbia River.

On the Columbia River, the City-managed major open space land includes Leslie Groves Park located between Snyder Street and Ferry Street; and the Columbia Point South area, which is a largely undeveloped area of 230 acres located at the confluence of the Yakima River and the Columbia River. Other major open space land includes the islands on the river that are part of the McNary National Wildlife Refuge.

Air and Water Quality

AIR

One of the basic characteristics of a livable city is clean air. Numerous federal, state, and regional agencies enact and enforce legislation to protect air quality. Good air quality in Richland, and in the region, requires controlling emissions from all sources, including internal combustion engines, industrial operations, indoor and outdoor burning, and wind-borne particles from land clearing and development. In the Eastern Washinton region, vehicle emissions are the primary source of air pollution and particulates and smoke generated from wildland fires across the Western US and Canada can also have substantial impacts.

Local and regional components must be integrated in a comprehensive strategy designed to improve air quality through transportation system improvements, vehicle emissions reductions, and vehicle trip demand management strategies.

Air quality is measured by the concentration of chemical compounds and particulate matter in the air outside of buildings. Air that contains carbon monoxide, ozone, and particulate matter can degrade the health of humans, animals, and plants. Human health risks from poor air quality range in severity from headaches and dizziness to cancer, respiratory disease, and other serious illnesses, to premature death. Potential ecological impacts include damage to trees and other types of vegetation. Quality of life concerns relating to poor visibility and deposit of soot and other particulate matter on homes and other property are additional concerns.

WATER

As development continues in Richland, it will affect water quality and stormwater quantity. New development can cause or aggravate drainage problems by increasing impervious areas, reducing vegetative cover, changing runoff routes, accelerating runoff rate and in other ways. By increasing stormwater quantity and velocity, development can diminish water quality. Improvements and mitigation measures are needed to reduce the risk of erosion, landslides and flooding, and secondary impacts such as property damage, road closures, degradation of fish and wildlife habitat and inundation of septic systems.

Watersheds

Richland falls within two Water Resource Inventory Areas: WRIA 37 (Lower Yakima) and WRIA 40 (Alkali-Squilchuck). The Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) states that “WRIAs are areas defined by higher elevation that capture precipitation and funnel rain and snowmelt through smaller subbasins into streams, tributaries, and rivers.” These WRIAs line up with two HUC-8 watersheds as defined by the National Hydrologic Dataset: Lower Yakima and Upper Columbia-Priest Rapids. Within the HUC-8 watershed, multiple sub-basins exist corresponding to more specific hydrological features; these are HUC-12 watersheds. (See Figure NE-3 for locations and sub-basins.)

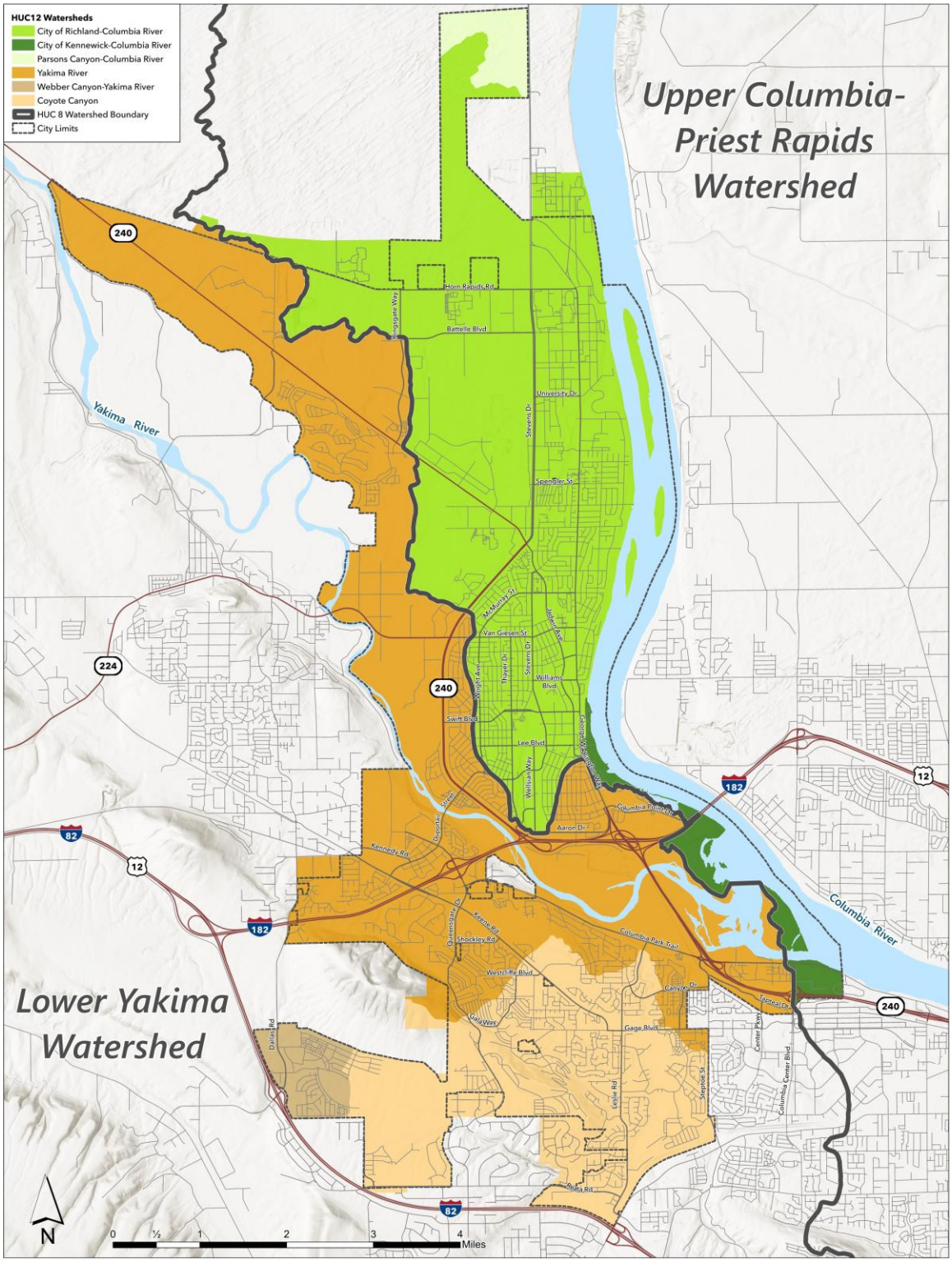

Figure NE-3: Watersheds of the Richland UGA

Groundwater and Aquifer Recharge Areas

When precipitation occurs, rainwater infiltrates the soil and percolates to the water table. This action recharges the groundwater system. Groundwater moves down a hydraulic gradient to where the water table either coincides with or lies above the land surface—this is the discharge area. Areas of permeable soil and areas where surface water accumulates are likely to be aquifer recharge areas.

Preventing groundwater contamination is much more cost-effective than groundwater cleanup requirements, and the GMA requires protection of the public groundwater drinking supplies.

The state of aquifer recharge areas affects the quantity and quality of groundwater. For instance, polluted areas and areas with a high amount of impervious surfaces can have a negative impact on groundwater supplies.

Pollution contaminates water, whereas impervious surfaces reduce the amount of water returning to groundwater storage systems. Land uses directly impact the state of aquifer recharge areas.

The GMA requires that cities and counties identify and regulate areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water.

Toxic algae

Toxic algae blooms occur in the Columbia River in early fall. These blooms are increasingly common in water bodies throughout the world and are thought to be caused in part by climate change. The blooms are significant because they affect water quality, ecosystem stability, surface drinking water supplies and public health. Toxic algae are harmful to humans and animals.

Groundwater Nitrate Contamination

Nitrate contamination is a significant concern in areas around Richland. Nitrate contamination occurs when fertilizers, manure, and irrigation runoff from agricultural lands infiltrate into the groundwater. Another source of nitrates includes the Hanford Site, where wastewater injections during the site's operational phase included nitrates. Human health can be negatively impacted by nitrates, particularly infant health.

Water Quality Protection Measures

The City adopted Best Management Practices (BMPs) to protect water quality. BMPs include structures or operations intended to prevent pollutants from mingling with stormwater through physical separation of areas or careful management of activities that are sources of pollutants. This is discussed in further detail in the Capital Facilities Element of this plan.

Urban Forestry

The urban forest is comprised of all of the trees within the city of Richland, including street trees, private trees such as in residential and commercial areas, trees within parks, open spaces, golf courses, cemeteries, campuses, and around other public facilities such as transit stations. The urban forest provides numerous benefits, such as:

- **Shade**—reducing cooling costs and enhancing outdoor physical activities, therefore promoting human and animal health;
- **Reducing air pollution**—by absorbing pollutants and releasing oxygen, trees act as natural filters, removing harmful gases like ozone and carbon monoxide;
- **Improving water quality** – trees and other vegetation absorb pollutants and provide important habitat values;

- **Reducing greenhouse gasses**—by absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen; and
- **Increasing property values**—by providing the benefits listed above, trees make both residential and commercial property more desirable and valuable.

Due to its unique and wide-ranging benefits, the city of Richland is committed to preserving the urban forest by maintaining existing trees, planting new trees, and preserving trees during new construction, except when it is impossible to do so due to the design needs of the project. In this case, the city requires trees to be replaced at ratios that compensate for the loss of existing trees.

The city participates in the Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City USA program.

In 2025, an Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) assessment was conducted to quantify the presence of trees within the city limits. The work was conducted as part of the Climate Change element work. Key findings included:

- In 2023 Richland had 8.5% Tree Canopy Cover (which had decreased from 2011 conditions)
- Only 7% of the city's impervious areas are shaded by tree canopy, increasing vulnerability to climate change

Sustainability

Richland's built and natural environment is maintained through multiple design and environmental protection approaches. Its natural resources are protected under the regulations within the CAO, the SMP, as well as State and Federal Laws. The City also maintains energy efficiency, renewable energy, and recycling programs.

The City encourages the use of sustainable standards including, but not limited to, passive solar energy, geothermal energy, solar hot water systems, Green Building Certification, ENERGY STAR® Certification, and bird-friendly buildings (i.e., those that are designed to minimize collisions with birds).

The City encourages minimizing light trespass for energy savings, dark sky ambience, and glare reduction.

WATER CONSERVATION AND USE

See the Capital Facilities Element and Utilities Element for further information.

WASTE AND RECYCLING

See the Capital Facilities Element for further information.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT GOALS AND POLICIES

Goal NE.1 Coordinate the protection, conservation, and restoration of natural areas, shorelines, and critical areas as unique assets to the community and provide public access by promoting the City's environmental policies and programs as beneficial opportunities for environmental stewardship.

NE.1a Designate and protect critical areas, their functions and values, and the natural environment (including unique natural habitats and significant landforms) through the application of the Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO), the SMP, SEPA, and other applicable standards.

NE.1b Advance integrated and interdisciplinary approaches for environmental planning and assessments and ensure the use of the Best Available Science.

NE.1c Safeguard wetlands, waterways, and riparian zones so they can naturally absorb floodwaters and support wildlife habitats, as outlined in the critical areas ordinance.

NE.1d All development activities shall be located, designed, constructed, and managed to avoid disturbance of and follow the mitigation sequence to minimize adverse impacts to fish and wildlife resources, including spawning, nesting, rearing and habitat areas and migratory routes, resulting in no net loss of critical area ecological functions.

NE.1e Provide on-site density transfer opportunities where private property is encumbered by critical areas or their buffers and setbacks, subject to limitations and conditions.

NE.1f Promote environmental education in an appropriate manner based on the sensitivity of the subject area.

NE.1g Encourage informational and educational programs and activities addressing the protection of vital ecosystems and wildlife habitats.

NE.1h Encourage the public and/or private acquisition of the prominent ridges in the south Richland area to preserve views, protect shrub- steppe habitat, and to provide public access. Consider the preservation of the ridges and hillside areas through various standards.

NE.1i Limit the negative impacts of development on public lands and environmental resources and require full mitigation of impacts when they are unavoidable.

NE.1j Develop an integrated pedestrian trail system to provide access to the city's important natural features, such as prominent ridges and rivershore areas and provide necessary trail linkages between these natural features.

NE.1k Promote the preservation of natural habitat in the development of new parks and use native vegetation and other Low-Impact Development principles where feasible.

NE.1l Divert organic material going to landfills in order to reduce methane emissions through the implementation of the City's compost procurement policy and conduct educational outreach to inform residents about the value of compost and how the city uses compost.

NE.1m Encourage bird-friendly building design, particularly near water bodies, wetlands, and other key habitats.

NE.1n Communicate and coordinate with Tribal Nations to identify and support the conservation of culturally significant fish, flora and fauna, and understand Tribal perspectives on environmental impacts, stewardship, and resource management.

Goal NE.2 Provide for long-term protection of wetlands to ensure a no net loss of their ecological benefits and functions.

NE.2a Regulate uses, activities, and alterations within wetlands and their buffers to protect the wetlands and preserve their functions and values.

NE.2b Use multiple tools to achieve wetland protection and restoration, including property acquisition, voluntary enhancement, property developer incentives, and code requirements, such as conservation easements.

Goal NE.3 Protect fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, riparian zones, and other terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and natural areas throughout the city to support sustainable fish and wildlife populations.

Also see Policies NE.2a, NE.8a, NE.9a

NE.3a Prohibit the unnecessary disturbance or removal of native vegetation in new development in accordance with the Critical Areas Ordinance.

NE.3b Continue to prioritize tree planting within the city and on City properties and employ a City Arborist.

NE.3c Encourage the identification and removal of invasive species and pests and the replanting of native vegetation, together with measures which prevent the spread of such species.

NE.3d Preserve and restore native vegetation and tree canopy, especially where it protects habitat and contributes to overall ecological function.

NE.3e Consider, identify, and designate habitats and species of local importance to protect.

NE.3f Use Riparian Management Zones (RMZs) and other regulatory measures where necessary to protect hydraulic, hydrologic, ecological, and aesthetic functions of waterways.

Goal NE.4 Manage development in designated floodplains and other areas prone to flooding to protect natural processes, human health and safety, and property.

NE.4a Promote educational efforts informing landowners and residents about hazardous areas and steps they can take to mitigate risks and prepare for emergencies.

NE.4b Protect existing natural areas and drainage systems that provide stormwater conveyance and storage during flood events.

NE.4c Implement and apply Flood Damage Prevention regulations to identify and regulate lands which are in FEMA-designated Special Flood Hazard Areas and maintain compliance with FEMA's flood insurance program.

Goal NE.5 Enhance and protect Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas (CARAs) to ensure safe and adequate drinking water while promoting sustainable use and conservation of the City's surface water, groundwater, and stormwater resources.

NE.5a Use regulatory tools to ensure the ground water which could be used, or is used, for drinking water is protected by prohibiting certain land uses and activities with an elevated risk of pollution from locating within CARAs.

NE.5b Partner with other regional agencies and community groups to protect CARA's and restore habitat through coordinated planning, funding, and implementation.

Goal NE.6 Manage development in geologically hazardous areas to protect public health and safety and property.

Also see Policies NE.4a, NE.8a

NE.6a In areas prone to erosion, grading activities should be limited, and any disturbed vegetation should be restored as soon as feasible. In all cases, appropriate measures to control erosion and sedimentation shall be required.

NE.6b Promote retention of vegetation and limit land disturbance in identified steep slope and landslide hazard areas.

NE.6c Regulate development in hazardous areas to ensure that it does not cause safety risks, and that appropriate building standards and mitigation measures are used to address site conditions.

Goal NE.7 Protect the city's designated shoreline areas to ensure they are used efficiently and developed in an environmentally and sustainable manner while providing public access.

The goals and policies of the SMP are a part of this Comprehensive Plan.

NE.7a Encourage development of water-oriented recreational, cultural, and commercial facilities in certain Yakima and Columbia River locations, consistent with the SMP and its criteria of no net loss of ecological functions, to enhance and diversify Richland's community recreational resources and its attractiveness to tourists.

NE.7b Ensure public access to shorelines on public land, subject to regulations protecting public safety, sensitive habitat areas, and wildlife.

NE.7c Use the City's Shoreline Master Program to regulate development, modifications, and land uses of all designated Shorelines of the State within Richland and other areas within shoreline jurisdiction.

Goal NE.8 Preserve, enhance, and expand the city's open and green spaces to protect natural resources and support biodiversity while providing for aesthetically pleasing spaces that promote recreational opportunities and community well-being to ensure a high quality of life for current and future residents.

NE.8a Evaluate opportunities to acquire and/or protect additional open space to preserve significant landforms, critical habitat areas, and appropriate native vegetation areas.

NE.8b Seek to retain and protect wetlands, river and stream banks, ravines, and any other areas that provide essential habitat for endangered or threatened plant or wildlife species as open space.

Goal NE.9 Protect and enhance the city's water quality and hydrologic processes.

Also see Policies NE.2a, NE.3d, NE4.b, NE6.a, and NE6.b

NE.9a Implement the use of source-control Best Management Practices (BMPs) to benefit plants, animals, fish, and related habitats. BMPs are a structure or operation intended to prevent pollutants from coming into contact with stormwater through physical separation of areas or careful management of activities that are sources of pollutants. Operational source control BMPs are non-structural practices that prevent or reduce pollutants from entering stormwater.

NE.9b Encourage the use of Low-Impact Development principles (i.e., reducing impervious surfaces, reducing stormwater runoff, and encouraging native plantings) to reduce and to mitigate against the discharge of pollutants.

NE.9c Strive to prevent pollution of surface water, soil, and groundwater resources through regulations, programs, and public education.

NE.9d Support initiatives to reduce impervious surfaces, prevent surface erosion, decrease the use of fertilizer and pesticides, while preventing stormwater runoff contamination.

Goal NE.10 Protect and enhance the city's air quality in coordination with local, regional, and federal clean air agencies and organizations.

Also see Policy NE.3d

NE.10a Support federal, state, and regional clean air policies, and collaborate with the Benton Clean Air Authority.

NE.10b Maintain and consider enhancing dust abatement activities and regulations.

PROJECT MEMO

TO:	Mike Stevens, City of Richland	**DATE:**	April 6, 2026
FROM:	Nicole Stickney Pasco - (253) 383-2422	**PROJECT NO.:**	2240885.30
		PROJECT NAME:	Richland 2026 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update
SUBJECT:	Parks and Recreation Element Staff Report		

AHBL planners have prepared the first draft of the Parks and Recreation Element of the Comprehensive Plan. The proposed Element is new and is intended to incorporate and adopt by reference the City's Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan.

We recommend that you include this memo with the draft (dated April 6, 2026) in the Planning Commission's meeting packet for April for their review.

The 2017 City of Richland Comprehensive Plan included information, goals, and policies about parks, recreation, and open space in the Land Use, Capital Facilities, and Natural Environment Elements and we propose discussions in those elements mostly remain. This additional and separate element specifically incorporates the City's Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan, tying it together with the Comprehensive Plan.

The Richland City Council adopted the City's current PROS plan on July 16, 2019, and it applies to years 2019-2025. To be eligible for State of Washington Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) grants, the City must have a current adopted PROS plan. The City hired Moore Iacofano Goltsman, Inc.(MIG) to complete an update to the plan, which began in the spring of 2025. The update process to this point has included an assessment of the parks, recreation, and open space systems, community interviews, and two surveys to identify community needs for parks, facilities, trails, and recreation programs.

The City provides information about the update online here: Richland, WA | Capital Projects Info | ClearGov.

There you will find a project overview and supporting materials including the Richland PROS Plan Brief #1: State of the System and Appendix C that includes an engagement summary. The next steps of the update will include staff workshops and meetings with the City Council and Parks and Recreation Commission.

PARKS AND RECREATION

DRAFT FOR PLANNING COMMISSION REVIEW

(DRAFT DATE: APRIL 6, 2026)

Richland's location at the confluence of the Columbia and Yakima Rivers and its predominantly sunny climate provide excellent conditions for outdoor recreation and community gatherings. Residents and visitors enjoy playing and gathering in 1,140 acres of developed open space, and over 1,740 acres of natural open spaces within the city. These spaces are made up of 72 parks and natural open spaces and 80 miles of trails that include neighborhood playgrounds, walking and biking paths, recreational facilities, sports complexes, and places to simply experience nature.

The City of Richland also manages and maintains many recreation facilities offering programming for all ages and stages of life. The community is fortunate to have such assets as the Richland Community Center, George Prout Pool, the City of Richland Library, the REACH Museum, Horn Rapids ORV Park, the HAPO Community Stage, and the Columbia Point Golf Course, among others. Programming includes a variety of festivals, community concerts, and other events that take place in the parks and facilities.

Descriptions and a full inventory of parks, trails, open space, and recreational programming are provided in the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan. This 6-year plan guides the future of Richland's parks, recreation amenities, and natural areas, ensuring the City continues to meet the needs of the growing community. A parks plan is certified by the state Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) and is required to be eligible for RCO grant funding.

The City of Richland 2026-2032 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan (PROS), as approved by Richland City Council pursuant to Resolution 2026-XX, is hereby adopted by this reference. The City of Richland PROS Plan covers a six-year planning period and may be amended or replaced at the end of that period, and subsequent six-year periods. This comprehensive plan references the most current version of the PROS Plan.

See the Capital Facilities Element of this plan for focused information and Goals / Policies related to City owned community spaces such as the Library and the Community Center.