

Future Zoning Conditions & Considerations

Vinegar Flats Planning Committee · Working report begun September 28, 2026

The Future Land Use Map sets the broad direction. The details neighbors care about most (buffers, building heights, what kinds of businesses, when roads get built) come later through zoning and development standards. This report is where we collect those "how" ideas so they're ready when that phase starts.

Nothing here is an adopted position. These are ideas to research and discuss. Each one lists where it came from and what we'd need to find out.

Where these came from

- **Conditions Board:** one Post-it.
- **A written comment** turned in at the meeting with five specific conditions.
- **Swear Jar cards** that proposed a specific rule, not just a concern. (Full cards are in the Neighbor Concerns & Questions Report, cited here as S1 to S10.)
- **Amendments** neighbors made to the voted statements. These carried as principles, and the specifics behind them belong here.

Conditions by topic

A • Latah Creek and its tributaries

Condition idea	Source	To research
The Latah-Hangman Creek corridor should have the highest protection, with a 250-foot buffer (citing WDFW and the Department of Ecology).	Written comment, #1	The City's current riparian buffer for Latah Creek under its Critical Areas code, and the WDFW and Ecology guidance the 250-foot figure comes from.
Creek protections should be set according to the best available science.	Amendment to Statement 4	How the City applies the state requirement to use best available science for critical areas (RCW 36.70A.172), and which studies it relies on for Latah Creek.
Protections should cover the creek's tributaries, not only the main channel.	Amendments to Statements 4 and 10	Which tributaries and drainages in Vinegar Flats are mapped, and what buffers apply to them now.

B • Wildlife corridor and critical areas

Condition idea	Source	To research
Protect the wildlife habitat corridor identified by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.	Written comment, #2	WDFW Priority Habitats and Species mapping for the Latah Creek valley, and whether the draft FLUM overlaps it.
The writer states the Critical Areas Ordinance requires 1-to-1 protection and that current Planning Department policy isn't applying it.	Written comment, #2	What "1 to 1" refers to in the City's Critical Areas code, and whether that claim holds. Unverified.
Don't allow building on steep slopes.	Written comment, #3	The City's geologic hazard and steep-slope standards, and which Vinegar Flats parcels are mapped as steep slopes.
Steep slopes, wildlife habitat, wetlands and riparian areas must be protected per the Critical Areas Ordinance.	Written comment, #4	Current critical-area mapping for the draft Mixed Use and Residential High areas.
Creek-area development should include environmental planning with tribal engagement.	Amendment to Statement 10	Which tribal governments the City consults on land use in the Latah Creek valley, and at what stage.

C • Infrastructure first

Condition idea	Source	To research
Infrastructure must be in place (concurrency) before building permits are issued.	Written comment, #5 · S2 · Amendment to Statement 11	The City's concurrency rules: which facilities they cover, and whether they're tested at rezone or at permit.
Existing infrastructure shortfalls for Eagle Ridge, Thorpe and Hangman should be resolved, in compliance with WSDOT, before new development in Vinegar Flats.	S2	WSDOT and City capacity data for US 195 and the local connections.
Fire and emergency access should be part of the infrastructure test.	Amendment to Statement 11	Spokane Fire Department access and response standards for the corridor.

D • What Mixed Use should look like, and where

Condition idea	Source	To research
Only small shops or businesses. No convenience-store chains ("No Circle K's, for example"). Only on Inland Empire Way.	Conditions Board Post-it	Which uses the likely implementing zones allow, and whether zoning can limit business size or type along the corridor. Withdrawn Statement 12 (genuine neighborhood-serving commercial) covered related ground.
Place some Mixed Use on the northern side of Inland Empire Way rather than all of it on the southern side.	S5	Which parcels on the northern side could take a Mixed Use designation.
Keep Mixed Use and Residential High along Inland Empire Way, not on the outer edges of the zone.	S6	Compare against the draft FLUM boundaries.

E • Traffic and connections

Condition idea	Source	To research
Control vehicle speeds on Inland Empire Way if density is added.	S6	Current speed data (neighbors have separately asked for a speed reader on Inland Empire Way) and the City's traffic-calming process.
Keep the south end of Inland Empire Way closed to US 195.	S1 · S8	Whether any City or WSDOT plan proposes opening it.
Resolve a Thorpe Road connection to US 195 before zoning is mapped.	S3	Status of any Thorpe Road and US 195 plans.

Next steps

- Keep adding to this report as neighbors bring new conditions ideas.
- Assign research questions to volunteers and bring findings back to the Committee.
- Use this list as the Committee's starting agenda when the City begins drafting zoning and development standards for the corridor.