

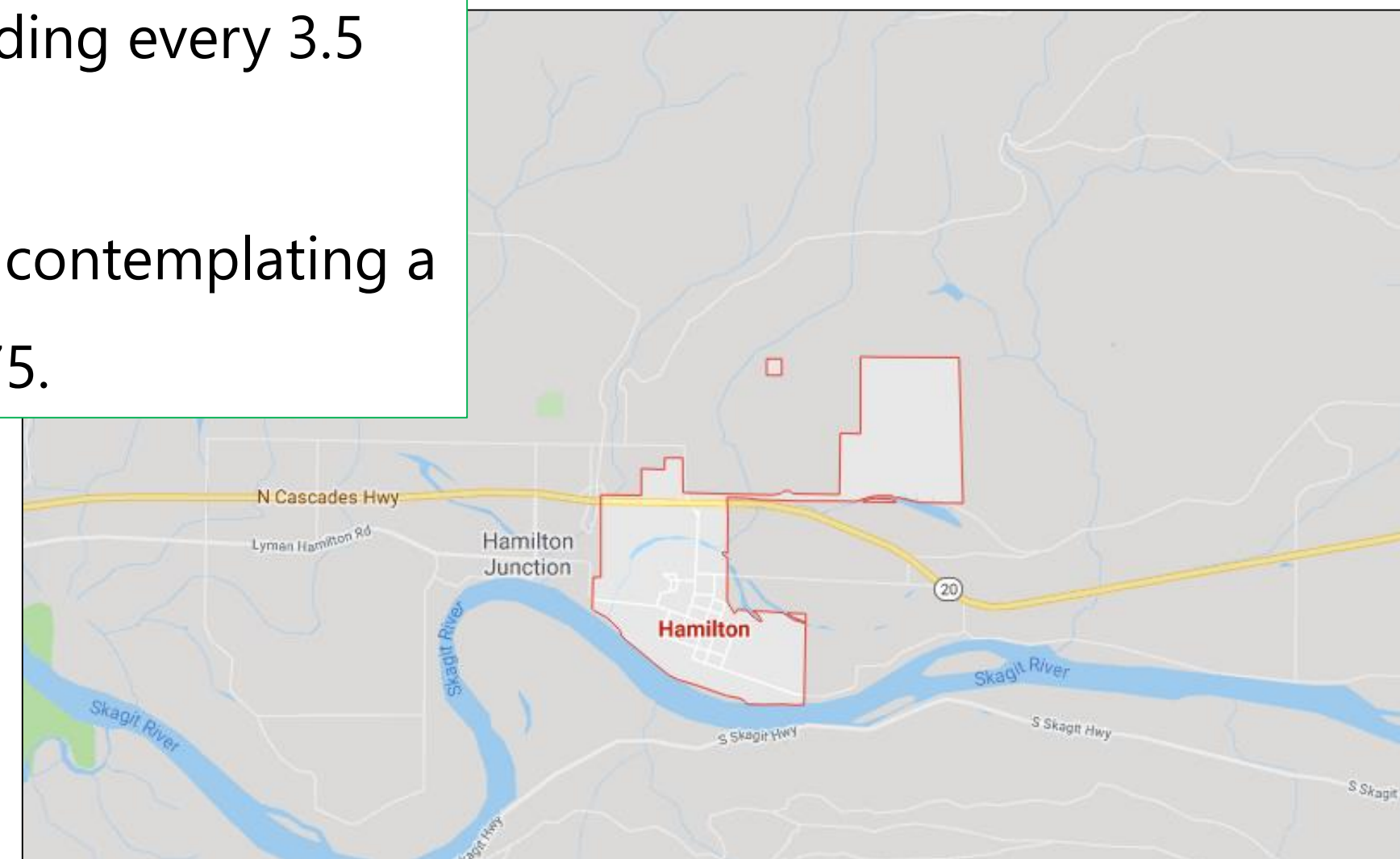
Community Storytelling in Hamilton WA



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Hamilton WA

- Founded in 1872.
- 90% of residential area located in floodplain.
- Significant flooding every 3.5 years.
- Town has been contemplating a move since 1975.



Map of Hamilton WA. Digital Image. Google Maps. <https://tinyurl.com/vxgpp88u>.

“This place is who we are.”

-FORT&RRA

Information Challenge

Understanding the unique community of Hamilton WA, in order to:

- Adequately and respectfully assist the residents who wish to move out of the floodplain to the new town site.
- Create a place that still reflects the personality and qualities that town residents love about Hamilton.

Storytelling Project: A collection of personal narratives and town history, which will be used to inform Forterra’s work with Hamilton residents, as well as to inform the building of a community center at the new town site.

My Contributions

- Created an interview guide.
- Met with residents and listened to their stories.
- Reported to Forterra on common themes from storytelling interviews, town history and town visit.
- Advised on possible next steps.



Terrell, Scott. *Evacuation Route*. Skagit Valley Herald. https://www.goskagit.com/news/local_news/community-reacts-to-plan-to-extend-hamilton-onto-drier-ground/article_53af1117-2dd1-5708-8e00-c7d26282b4a2.html

Information & Statistics

- Located in Skagit County, in north-western Washington State.
- 300 residents, according to the 2010 census.
- Town of Hamilton has the lowest income of any incorporated community in Skagit County, with 59% of households qualifying with HUD as low-to-moderate income
- 21.2% of Hamilton families live below the poverty level.
- FEMA estimates it has spent at least \$10 million helping Hamilton residents recover over the years.

Skagit County Planning and Development Services. *Hamilton Public Development Authority: Appendix K Hamilton Social and Economic Statistical Data, ~2007*, <https://www.skagitcounty.net/PlanningAndPermit/Documents/HamiltonSubArea/Appendix%20K%20-%20Hamilton%20Socio-Economic%20Statistics.pdf>

FORT&RRA

- Land conservancy, founded in 1989.
- Committed to “linking community and conservation, people and place.”
- Protecting the land = caring for, and working with, the people who live on the land.
- Focused on the interconnectedness of natural, built, and social environments.



Shirley, Lucy. *The site for the new town of Hamilton, north of Highway 20*. <https://forterra.org/editorial/making-a-new-northwest-town>.

Actions & Next Steps

Fostering a sense of community:

- Community story hour
- Town meetings/discussions on safety

Keeping residents “in the loop”:

- Provide access government/FEMA policies.
- Bring awareness to effects of flooding on environment.