

Inside/Outside City Limits

We have heard questions on why people who live in areas considered Arlington can't vote in city elections.

First, an incorporated city or town, such as City of Arlington, has centralized service (police, fire, schools), control over finance and tax revenue for city services, a governing body, and a boundary (city limits). Incorporation is granted by the state government; the City of Arlington was incorporated in 1903.

The term "inside city limits" refers to the area that is within the official boundaries of a city. These boundaries are often marked with signs (gateway signs on State Route 9 and State Route 530). You can view a map of Arlington with city limits outlined in red at www.arlingtonwa.gov/citymap . Areas outside of city limits are generally unincorporated and fall under their county's jurisdiction when it comes to taxes and laws.

If you live outside of city limits, you are a Snohomish County resident, but in the Arlington Zip code 98223. ZIP codes are used by the United States Postal Service and do not necessarily correspond to city limits. ZIP code boundaries often do not match city borders, which can cause confusion for residents. Therefore, it is possible for two areas with the same postal code to be inside and outside of city limits, respectively.

City Limits and Voting: Why can't residents living outside city limits vote in city elections?

As a general rule, property within a city's limit is subject to city taxation and city regulation and can expect city services (provided by the city government). Areas outside any city's limit are considered to be unincorporated, and in most U.S. states they are by default regulated and taxed by the county.

Even if you work or own property in another area, you must choose one residence and one region to register and vote in.

If you live in the city limits of Arlington you can vote for the mayor, city council representative and other initiatives that are on the ballot for the City of Arlington. People in the county can't vote in other cities' elections, you must live within those incorporated boundaries.

A city cannot add an area unless the area is within the urban growth boundary that is set based on state and county planning under the state Growth Management Act. If citizens want their property added to the urban growth area so they can become part of the City, they should become engaged in the planning process to try to influence the city boundaries.

