



City of Brier

South County Fire Annexation Information

What is South County Fire?



15 neighborhood fire stations
staffed 24/7, including the Brier Fire Station



300+ uniformed personnel

70 firefighters on duty during the day and 64 overnight



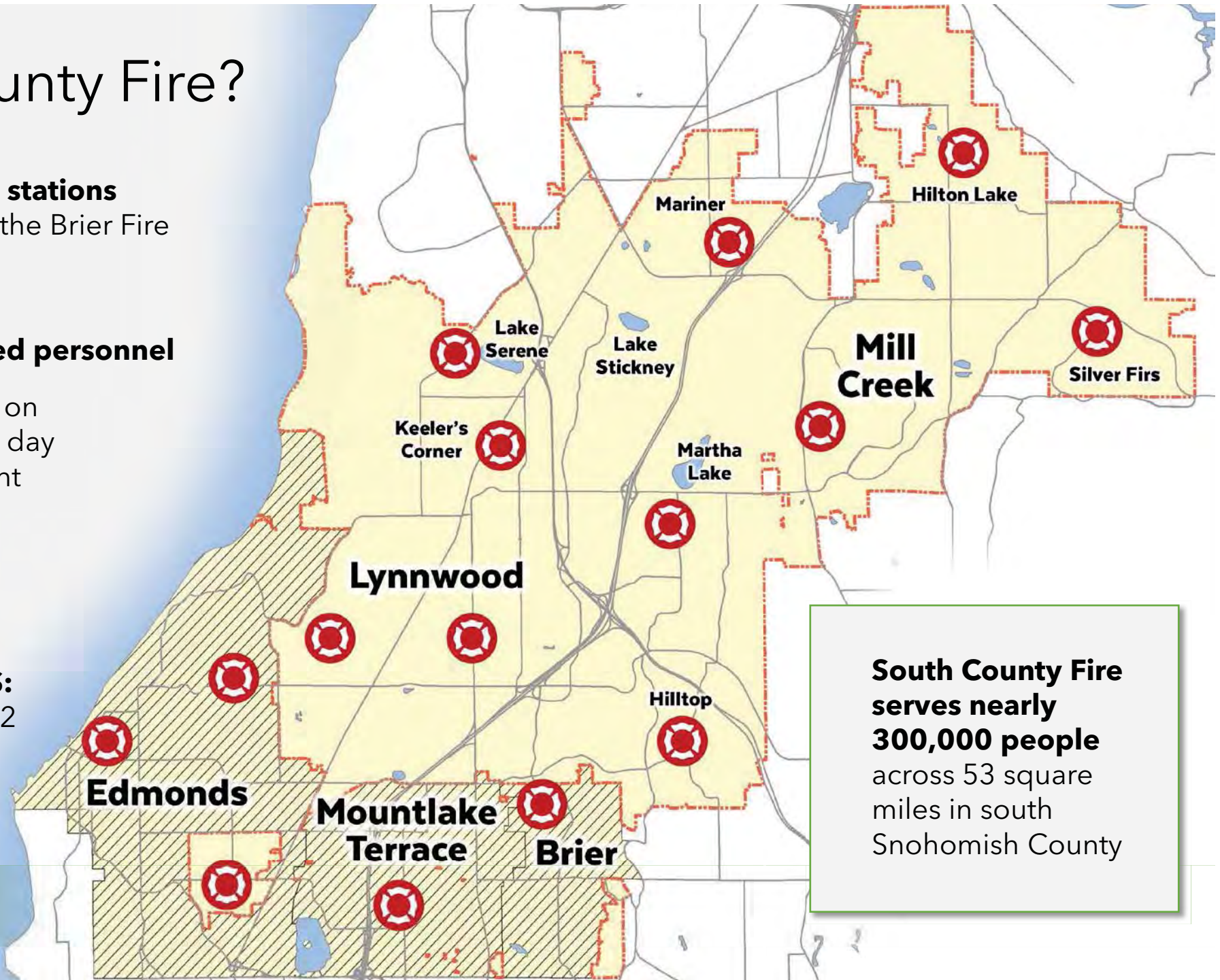
36,891 incidents in 2022



Most 911 calls are EMS:
Over 86% in Brier in 2022



CITY OF
BRIER
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South County Fire serves nearly 300,000 people across 53 square miles in south Snohomish County



What Is The Issue?

- The city contracts with South County Fire for fire and emergency medical service (EMS). **This contract is set to expire in 2024.**
- South County Fire cannot renew our contract **without a substantial cost increase.**
- The city also has its own police department, **which residents want to maintain.**

By law, a contract for service cannot be less than the rate paid by property owners in the fire authority. (RCW 43.09.210)



What Is Annexation?

Annexation would **change the way property owners pay for fire/EMS.**

Under annexation, Brier would become part of the regional fire authority and city property owners would **pay South County Fire directly for fire/EMS starting in 2024**, eliminating the city as the intermediary.

It also means Brier residents can **run for the Board of Fire Commissioners and vote on fire authority issues**, which is not possible under the existing contract.

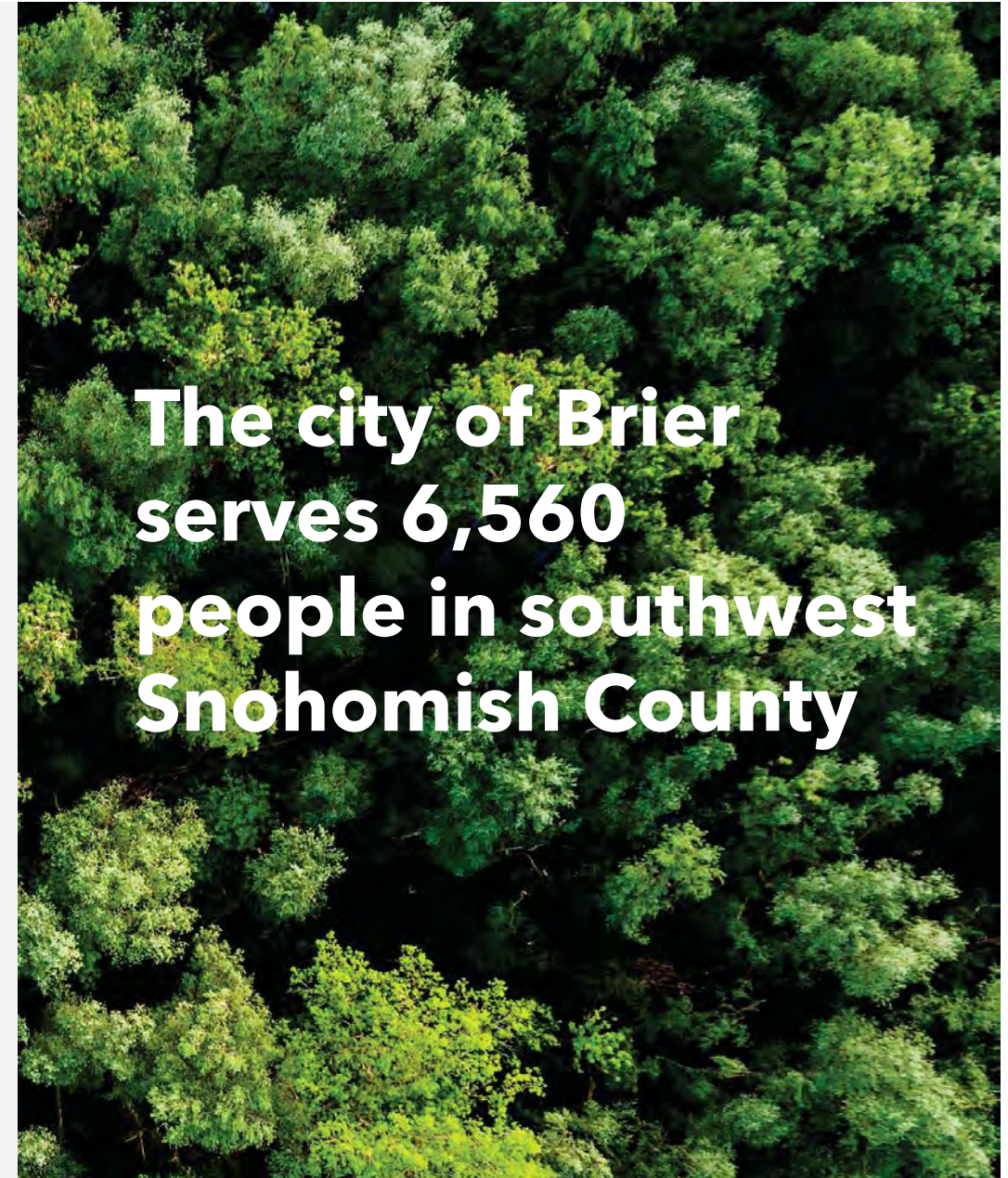


How We Are Funded

Unlike most cities that collect sales and utility taxes, Brier relies on **property taxes** for services:

- Police
- Fire and EMS
- Parks
- Public works
- Planning
- Transportation

This **lack of revenue options** impacts Brier's ability to fund these public services.



**The city of Brier
serves 6,560
people in southwest
Snohomish County**

How We Fund Emergency Services

POLICE AND FIRE



The city collects **\$0.37** for fire suppression and **\$0.21** for EMS from property owners to pay South County Fire for those services.

EMS



Funded through the city's general property tax levy of **\$0.51** per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

- o Fire accounts for **\$0.37**
- o Police accounts for **\$0.59**, of which **\$0.45** is funded from reserves

EMS is funded through a separate levy of **\$0.21** per \$1,000.

Fire/EMS equate to \$0.58 per \$1,000 in 2023



Public Safety Is Top Priority – But Not Sustainable

THE CHALLENGE

- Brier residents want to maintain its city police department
- Police, fire and EMS account for 63% of the city's general fund
- The city does not collect enough revenue to fund police, fire, EMS, and other services residents require



Maintaining the status quo will deplete the city's general fund by the end of 2026.

Source: BERK Consulting





How Did We Get Here?

1. **Brier has one of the lowest property tax rates** of any city in Snohomish County of \$0.51 - and the city has not raised its levy rate since 2009.

(Sales tax cannot cover the short fall because the city doesn't have the commercial development. There are only five businesses in town that the city collects sales tax.)

2. The city signed a contract with South County Fire almost 20 years ago when **emergency costs and 911 calls were much lower.**
3. Brier property owners have **benefitted significantly with lower rates** for fire and EMS. **This is no longer an option.**



THE PROPOSED WAY FORWARD

We Can Maintain Public Safety and Improve Services

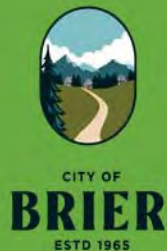
- The city is asking voters to consider **annexing to South County Fire on the April 25, 2023, special election ballot.**
- This means property owners would **pay South County Fire directly** for fire and EMS services starting in 2024.
- This is the recommended path forward by BERK Consulting, an independent consultant that found **annexation would allow the city to remain financially solvent.**

Find the BERK report at www.ci.brier.wa.us



How Will This Affect My Taxes?

\$0.51
per \$1,000
general property tax rate
for Brier property owners



CURRENTLY

The city collects taxes for fire, police and EMS

- **Fire** equates to **\$0.37** per \$1,000 (general property tax)
- **Police** equates to **\$0.59** per \$1,000 (general property tax/reserves)
- **EMS** equates to **\$0.21** per \$1,000 (EMS levy)

UNDER ANNEXATION

The city collects taxes for city services such as parks, police, planning and streets by retaining the \$0.37 currently spent on fire

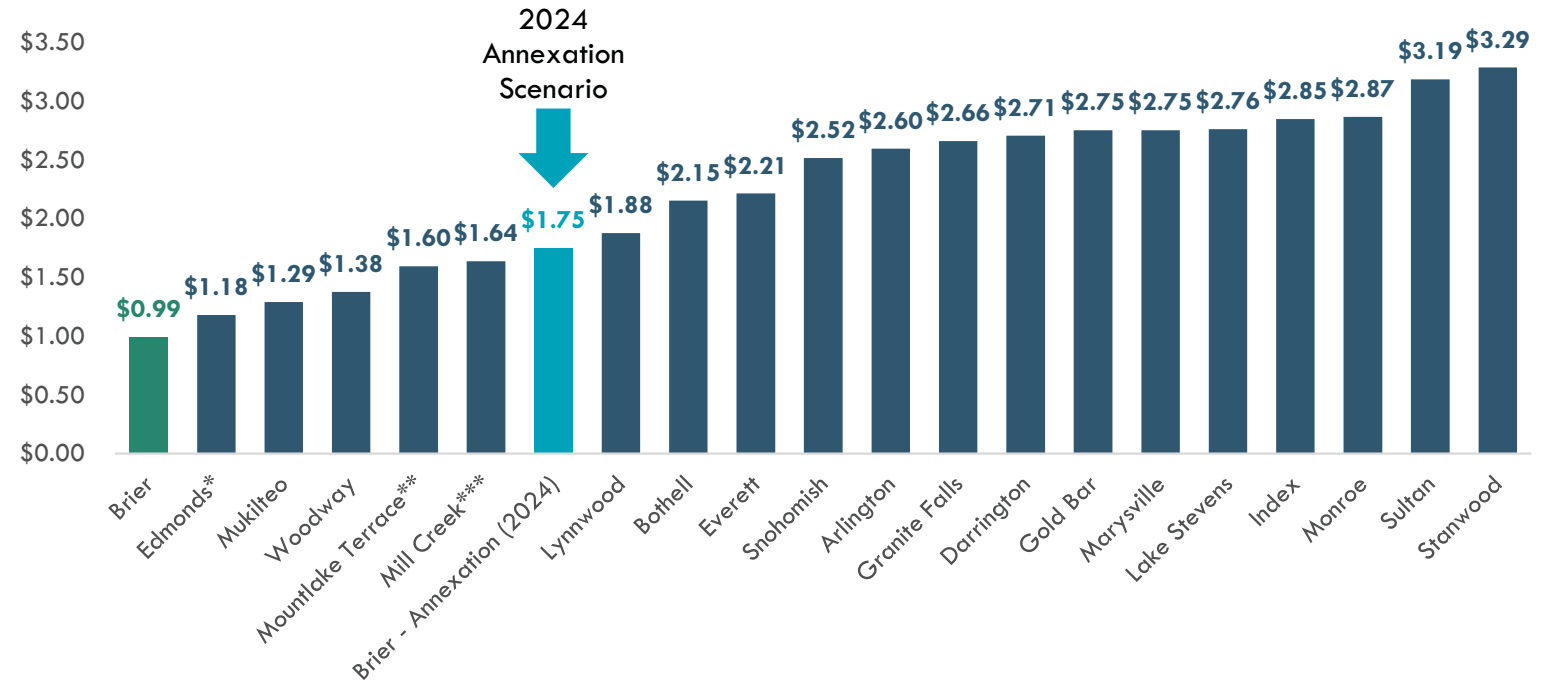
- **\$0.51** per \$1,000 spent on police and other city services
- The city **stops** collecting the EMS levy of \$0.21

South County Fire collects taxes directly from property owners for fire and EMS at \$1.10 per \$1,000 plus a fire benefit charge based on structure size and square footage. (*Fire benefit charge on a 2,000-square-foot home is \$70.46.*)

How Brier Compares To Other Cities

Combined city and South County Fire property tax rate in 2022 and 2024

\$1.75 Estimated combined Brier levy rate under annexation in **2024** in \$ per \$1,000 AV



*Edmonds contracts with SCF for fire/EMS. When the contract expires, Edmonds will likely face a similar choice as Brier is currently considering.

**Mountlake Terrace is considering annexation to SCF on the April ballot as well.

***Mill Creek voters approved annexation to SCF with 76% of the vote in 2022.





What Will This Cost?

Brier property owners would have paid South County Fire in 2023:

- **Fire & EMS levies** totaling \$1.10 per \$1,000 and no longer pay the city EMS levy of \$0.21 per \$1,000. Net levy increase: \$0.89 per \$1,000
- **Fire benefit charge** based on structure square footage and use:

HOME SIZE	BENEFIT CHARGE
1,000 square feet	\$49.82
2,000 square feet	\$70.46
3,000 square feet	\$88.29

South County Fire's total rate equates to about \$1.22 per \$1,000

Most county property owners pay \$2 per \$1,000 for this quality and level of fire and EMS.

What Will This Cost For An Average Home?

BASED ON A 2,000-SQUARE-FOOT HOME VALUED AT \$950,000

Fire and EMS levy rate of \$1.10 per \$1,000 collected by South County Fire	\$1,045.00
Fire benefit charge*	\$70.46
Total paid to South County Fire	\$1,115.46
Eliminate the city EMS levy	- \$199.50

**Based on structure square footage and use*

***This equates to an additional
\$915.96/year or
\$76.33/month for fire and
EMS.***



When Is The Election?

The proposition asking voters to consider annexing to
South County Fire will be on the

April 25, 2023

special election ballot



What Happens If Annexation Fails?

State law requires the city pass a balanced budget. If annexation fails:

- The city will need to pay higher contract fees for fire and EMS to South County Fire.
- The City Council will consider other voter and non-voter revenue options, including:
 - Renewing the EMS levy to the full \$0.50 (current rate is \$0.21)
 - Adding a special levy for police services
 - Increasing the city's general property tax levy
 - Non-voter-approved options such as higher utility taxes and fees



QUESTIONS?

To learn more, visit www.ci.brier.wa.us



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