

Feb. 2, 2000
Kitsap County, DCI

DRAFT With Planning Commission Comments
Rural Policy Issues
Executive Summary

The Kitsap County Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 1998, made a fundamental change in the role of rural lands. Previous planning encouraged rural area development as a primary source of residential growth in the County. The new Comprehensive Plan directs future development to urban growth areas, while maintaining the traditional character of rural areas for the pursuit of activities and life styles based upon the land, for the protection of the natural environment, and for the open space values that rural areas provide. Rural commercial and industrial areas will be allowed to continue, but not expand. Existing rural villages and communities are important components of the rural areas, and these communities may continue to develop within their traditionally defined boundaries. Outside of rural villages and communities, zoning ranges from a low of one dwelling unit per forty acres to a high of one dwelling unit per five acres of land.

During the years 2000 and 2001, a number of planning activities will further refine the County's approaches to development and conservation of rural lands. This paper presents an overview of rural policy to help each of the rural planning studies see how their work relates to overall ideas about rural lands and development. The paper also provides the following proposed policy guidance:

- A. The County should take a holistic, ecosystem approach to planning.
- B. Until detailed salmon and water basin planning is completed, use the best currently available information to designate areas presumed to be most environmentally critical as either:
 1. Areas to be avoided by development, or
 2. Areas not to be considered for increases in density.
- C. Do not increase the overall residential capacity of rural zoning.
- D. Opportunities to consolidate non-conforming lots should be explored.
- E. When setting the boundaries of Rural Villages and Communities, draw the boundaries tightly around lands already committed to higher density development and do not add unnecessarily to the existing excess supply of rural lots
- F. The County should provide incentives to keep land in timber production
- G. The Open Space Plan should implement the concepts of the Greenways Plan
 1. The priorities for open space acquisition should be reviewed
 2. Continue to use regulation as a major tool for keeping land in an open condition
 3. To balance the impacts of regulation, the County should allocate funding to pay for regulatory takings, and should provide flexibility where possible in the regulations
- H. Encourage rural clustering, consistent with the limitations of the Growth Management Act
- I. Make limited use of transfer of density rights (TDR)

1. Consider areas undergoing a change from rural to urban density as prime candidates to be "receiving areas" for transferred density
2. Limit the utilization of density transfer in Kitsap County to reflect the small number of areas that are likely receiving sites for higher density
3. Consider the use of TDR in the remote forested areas, especially in critical salmon habitat

Rural Policy Issues

1. Introduction

The vision of the Kitsap County Plan, adopted in 1998, is built around eight major ideas (see Appendix A), including the following that are most pertinent for the rural areas:

1. Maintenance of the traditional character, appearance, functions and lifestyles of the County's rural communities and areas
2. Protection and enhancement of the natural environment, including wetlands, streams, wildlife habitat, water quality and natural resource activities
3. Creation of a system of open space, parks and greenbelts, that provide opportunities for recreation and that give structure and separation to urban areas.

Along with this vision, the County adopted rural zoning that is consistent with the Growth Management Act. In the process, a fundamental shift has occurred. Rural land is no longer able to be seen as land waiting to be developed for urban or suburban housing. Under the Comprehensive Plan, rural use of land is a long term objective.

In 1999 the Board of County Commissioners created a Kitsap County Vision (see Appendix B) including these goals that have major bearing on the rural areas:

4. **Natural Beauty:** Kitsap County will protect and sustain our priceless natural resources for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations through education, adherence to our comprehensive land use plan, and coordination of individual and government efforts.
5. **Community Spirit:** Kitsap County shares a commitment to preserving our communities' uniqueness and will increase citizen involvement in determining their community's identities and futures by facilitating opportunities for public engagement.

During the years 2000 and 2001, Kitsap County will undertake a number of studies and actions to implement this vision. Combined, these studies will have great impact. Fundamental regulations will be considered including the rules that govern salmon habitat, new rules for shoreline properties, and the rules for development in forest areas. The concept of the Greenways Plan for an interconnected system of open spaces, trails, wildlife corridors, and scenic areas will be acted upon. Several rural communities will be asked to consider their future.