1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Overview

The City of Bremerton and Kitsap County, in partnership with other state, federal, and tribal agencies, has developed a 20-year plan for the future of Gorst. The purpose of this cooperative planning effort has been to develop a land use plan that is based on the ecological values and functions of the Gorst Creek Watershed in southeast Kitsap County (see Figure 1-1). The preparation of a plan of this nature required significant up-front environmental analysis and careful consideration of the effects that land use decisions would have on the environment.

There are three documents that have been prepared for Gorst, and though they can be read separately, each document relies on the information contained in the others:

Volume 1. Gorst Creek Watershed Characterization & Framework Plan (under separate cover)

Based on the results of a Watershed Characterization Study prepared in 2012 and amended in 2013 studying water flow and habitat, the Gorst Creek Watershed Characterization & Framework Plan guides water quality, habitat, and land use plans and activities across the approximately 6,570-acre watershed. The Gorst Creek Watershed Characterization & Framework Plan provides a common set of goals, policies, and best management practices intended for adoption and implementation by the City of Bremerton, which governs nearly two-thirds of the watershed in its city limits, and by Kitsap County, which governs unincorporated lands comprising over one-third of the watershed.

Volume 2. Gorst Planned Action Environmental Impact Statement (under separate cover)

The Gorst Planned Action Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is an informational document that provides the City of Bremerton, Kitsap County, members of the public, and other agencies with environmental information, an evaluation of alternatives, and potential mitigation measures to minimize environmental impacts. The Gorst EIS analyzes the No Action Alternative (Alternative 1), e.g. continuation of the City’s and County’s current Comprehensive Plans and development regulations applicable to the Gorst Creek Watershed and Gorst Urban Growth Area (UGA). The EIS also addresses two Action Alternatives (Alternatives 2 and 3) and a Preferred Alternative that vary land use patterns, particularly in the Gorst UGA; these alternatives consider increasing residential development and enhancing commercial development while promoting environmental restoration and protection. The Gorst EIS allows the City of Bremerton and Kitsap County to consider designating a planned action for some or all of the Gorst UGA. Designating a planned action streamlines environmental review for development proposals consistent with EIS mitigation measures that are adopted in a planned action ordinance.

Volume 3. Gorst Subarea Plan (this document)

This Gorst Subarea Plan is a comprehensive 20-year plan that establishes the general patterns for future land use, transportation and other infrastructure needs in Gorst. The purpose of this plan is to provide greater detail, guidance and predictability to future development within the Gorst UGA, while also protecting the environment.

While the Gorst Creek Watershed Characterization & Framework Plan referred to above analyzed the entire 6,570-acre Gorst Creek Watershed, this Subarea Plan is intended only to address the future vision and development regulations for the Gorst UGA, which is approximately 335 acres in size. The UGA is currently under the jurisdiction of Kitsap County and assigned to the City of Bremerton as an annexation area, and this Subarea Plan will be adopted jointly by both jurisdictions.
FIGURE 1-1. GORST WATERSHED AND GORST UGA VICINITY MAP

Watershed Boundary  Railroad
City Limits  Major Highway
Gorst UGA

Date: September 2013
Source: Parametrix, Department of Natural Resources, BERK
The Importance of Gorst

The Gorst community is located on Sinclair Inlet between Bremerton and Port Orchard (see Figure 1-1). Two highways converge in Gorst, SR 3 and SR 16. A railroad also traverses the area and connects the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard with the Bangor submarine facility and the Port of Shelton. Through Gorst, county residents, commuters, and military personnel travel to major job centers in the County including Downtown Bremerton and the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, Bremerton National Airport and associated South Kitsap Industrial Area, and others. From the north at Navy Yard City, State Route 3 carries 44,000 Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT), increasing to 73,000 AADT north of Gorst, and continuing on SR 16 to Port Orchard with 43,000 AADT. (WSDOT 2012)

In addition to being strategically located between major population and job centers in Kitsap County, the Gorst area contains regionally significant environmental resources. The approximately 6,570-acre Gorst Creek Watershed (see Figure 1-2) is diverse with thousands of acres of intact forest land, miles of streams and acres of wetlands. Much of the forested area that comprises the north and central portion of the Gorst Creek Watershed is publicly owned, and lies within a contiguous area that also contains Green Mountain and Tahuya State Forest. Taken together, this area comprises the largest open-space block in the Puget Trough Ecoregion of the Puget Sound Basin. The estuary (Sinclair Inlet) supports shellfish, waterfowl, shorebirds, great blue herons, and bald eagles. The Gorst Creek estuary is a major passageway and nursery for Puget Sound Chinook, Coho, and Chum salmon, along with Steelhead, and Sea-Run Cutthroat trout. Gorst Creek supports a fish rearing facility managed by the Suquamish Tribe and Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Prior to modern land use and environmental standards, development in Gorst has occurred haphazardly. There is commercial development along shorelines and state routes and residences along secondary roads. Past development has had environmental impacts to both the saltwater shoreline as well as the creek drainages within the watershed. There has been little revitalization in Gorst over the decades, which is likely due to a lack of sewer infrastructure and traffic congestion (see Figure 1-3 for UGA development patterns).
FIGURE 1-2. GORST WATERSHED AERIAL

Date: September 2013
Source: Kitsap County Assessor 2012, WA State Department of Ecology, BERK
FIGURE 1-3. GORST UGA AERIAL

Date: April 2013
Source: DigitalGlobe, Kitsap County Assessor 2012, BERK
Recently agencies have been addressing issues within Gorst: In 2010 the City of Bremerton, in coordination with Kitsap County, installed sewers in the Gorst UGA to reduce water quality contamination of Sinclair Inlet partially caused by failing septic systems. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and Kitsap County have invested resources to reclaim brownfields, which restored nearly 3,000 lineal feet of important saltwater shoreline and increased the recreation opportunities within Sinclair Inlet.

Though there has been some progress in improving Gorst, there is more to be accomplished. Gorst Creek does not meet all federal and state water quality standards. Fish passage barriers impede salmonids throughout the watershed. There is lowland flooding in the watershed, particularly in the UGA, as a result of upland deforestation. Traffic congestion hampers businesses, residents, and travelers.

Due to the importance of the Gorst area both environmentally and economically this interagency planning effort was undertaken. In particular, this Gorst Subarea Plan will help:

- Establish the 20 year vision for the Gorst UGA,
- Protect water quality, habitat, and fish while fostering economic development,
- Establish areas for development, restoration and protection based on science, and
- Provide a long-range capital facilities plan for future utility services, public services, and transportation needs.

**Gorst UGA Governance**

Gorst is dominated by a highway corridor, and from this corridor the uses in the area appear to be only commercial activities. However, off the corridor there is a small long-standing residential community, named for the Gorst family that settled there in 1888. Over one hundred years later, Kitsap County designated the most densely developed area of Gorst as an “urban growth area” (UGA).

Through Kitsap County’s Growth Management Act (GMA) planning efforts, in consultation with the City of Bremerton and the Kitsap Regional Coordinating Council, the Gorst UGA was associated with the City of Bremerton in 2008, which means that the unincorporated UGA is someday expected to annex to the City of Bremerton.

The City is the logical municipal service provider to Gorst. Due to significant public health concerns regarding failing septic systems in the area, the City of Bremerton has invested resources to extend sewer service to the area. The City also provides water service to the Gorst UGA. The transportation system is also an important link where SR 3 and SR 16 provide entry into southern Bremerton.

The City of Bremerton’s Comprehensive Plan introduction notes the following about Gorst:

> “At Gorst, where two State highways meet, Port Orchard is behind the traveler and the focus is ahead to Bremerton. Gorst is the real entry to Bremerton.”

The City anticipates that in the near term the area could become part of Bremerton city limits in accordance with State laws and procedures regarding annexation.

The Kitsap Countywide Planning Policies call for joint planning for UGA’s and the need to recognize unique community needs in subarea plans. The Gorst subarea plan is the first joint planning effort for a subarea plan between the City of Bremerton and Kitsap County, and it will be considered for adoption by both jurisdictions.
What does the future hold for Gorst?

With the presence of memorable views of Puget Sound, the recent availability of sewers, the promise of recreation opportunities on public lands along Sinclair Inlet, presence of fish and wildlife at the estuary, the potential for commercial economic growth, and opportunities to add housing and new residents, Gorst is poised to become a more desirable place where people want to live, shop, and recreate.

Given Gorst’s assets, its assorted commercial and residential pattern, and the potential to accommodate new growth, the question is asked: “What can Gorst become?” This Subarea Plan and its associated EIS examined alternatives for the future of the Gorst UGA. The Draft Plan and Draft EIS reviewed the following alternative visions:

- **Vision 1:** A small highway-oriented commercial and industrial center.
- **Vision 2:** A well-designed Regional Commercial Center.
- **Vision 3:** A Complete Community.

These three visions tested a range of land use and growth options in the UGA.

A Preferred Alternative was identified after public outreach and comment opportunities on the Draft Subarea Plan and Draft EIS concluded in summer 2013 (see Chapter 3). The Preferred Alternative is largely based on Vision 3 but includes selected elements of Visions 1 and 2. The Preferred Alternative vision is:

- **Preferred Vision:** Gorst becomes a complete and sustainable community.

The Draft and Preferred alternatives are compared in a Final EIS available under separate cover (Volume 2) in fall 2013. See Chapters 3 and 5 of this Subarea Plan for additional information on the planning process and the alternatives.