

Green Energy Special District Overlay Area Zoning and Land Use Study

I. OVERVIEW

This item has been identified by the King County Council as a potential land use and zoning map amendment as part of the 2024 update to the King County Comprehensive Plan. The proposal would add a Green Energy Special District overlay to five parcels that are near a utility corridor and have historical and current waste management and mineral extraction uses. The parcels are also immediately adjacent to the King County-owned Cedar Hills Regional Landfill. The overlay would change the permitting process for certain utility-related uses related to green energy generation and waste management on this site.

This Area Zoning and Land Use Study reviews the land use designations and implementing zoning for the five parcels that would be subject to the overlay, parcels 2823069009, 923069078, 2923069079, 2923069080, and 2923069082, and for the surrounding area.

II. LAND USE INFORMATION

A. Parcel and Vicinity Information

Parcel Number	Property Name/ Ownership	Land Use Designation	Zoning Classification	Development Conditions	Acreage	Present Use
2823069009	Queen City Farms	m and ra	M and RA-5	None	314.92	Cedar Grove Composting
2923069078	King County	m	М	None	19.76	Vacant/ Utility Corridor
2923069079	King County	m	М	None	20.00	Vacant/ Utility Corridor
2923069080	First South Properties, LLC	m	М	None	20.00	Vacant/ Historical Mining Site
2923069082	First South Properties, LLC	m	М	None	20.00	Vacant/ Historical Mining Site

The subject area (the "site") is made up of five parcels that total 394.44 acres. Four of the properties are roughly twenty acres in size; the remaining parcel, 2923069009 ("the Queen City Farms parcel"), is roughly 315 acres.

The property is located outside the Urban Growth Area. All five properties have a Comprehensive Plan designation of Mining (m) and a zoning classification of Mineral (M), except that the southeast corner of the Queen City Farms parcel totaling approximately 39 acres has a Comprehensive Plan designation of Rural Area (ra) and a zoning classification of Rural Area, one unit per 5 acres (RA-5). The portion of the Queen City Farms parcel that is zoned RA-5 is separated from the remainder of the parcel by Cedar Grove Road SE, which runs from the southwest to the northeast through the parcel. There are no property-specific development conditions or special district overlays that apply to any of the properties.

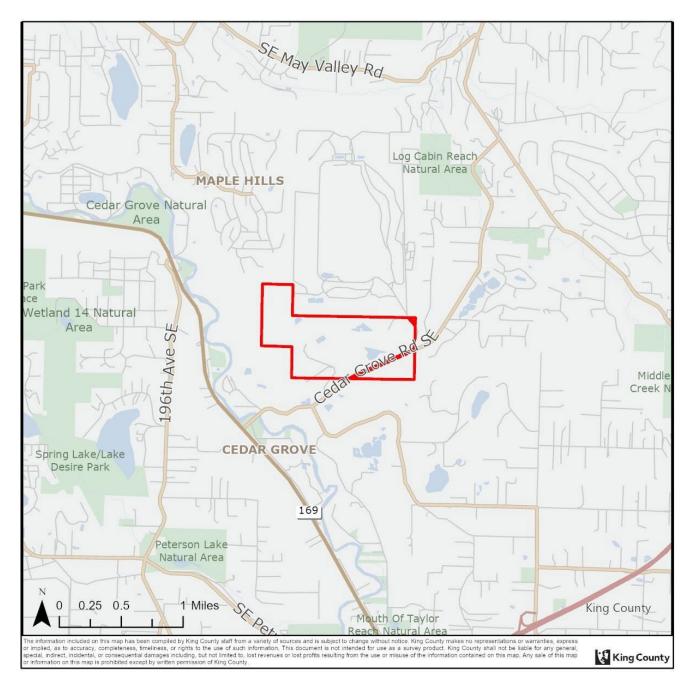
The surrounding properties to the north have Rural Area land use designations, and have Rural Area, one unit per 5 acres (RA-5) zoning. The exception to this is the property containing the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill, which abuts the Queen City Farms parcel to the north and has Rural Area, one unit per 10 acres (RA-10) zoning.

Parcels to the east of the site have Rural Area land use designations and Rural Area, one unit per 5 acres (RA-5) zoning.

Parcels to the south of the site have a variety of land use designations and zoning classifications. There are parcels with a Mining designation and Mineral (M) zoning, parcels with Rural Area land use designations and have Rural Area, one unit per 5 acres (RA-5) or Rural Area, one unit per 10 acres (RA-10) zoning, and, just over a half mile south of the property, several properties on the far side of Renton-Maple Valley Road SE have Rural Area land use designations and either Neighborhood Business (NB) or Industrial (I) zoning.

Parcels immediately to the west have the site have a Mining designation with Mineral (M) zoning, with the parcels beyond those being designated Rural Area with Rural Area, one unit per 10 acres (RA-10) zoning. The Cedar River is approximately a quarter mile from the westernmost boundary of the site.

B. Maps Figure 1 - Vicinity Map



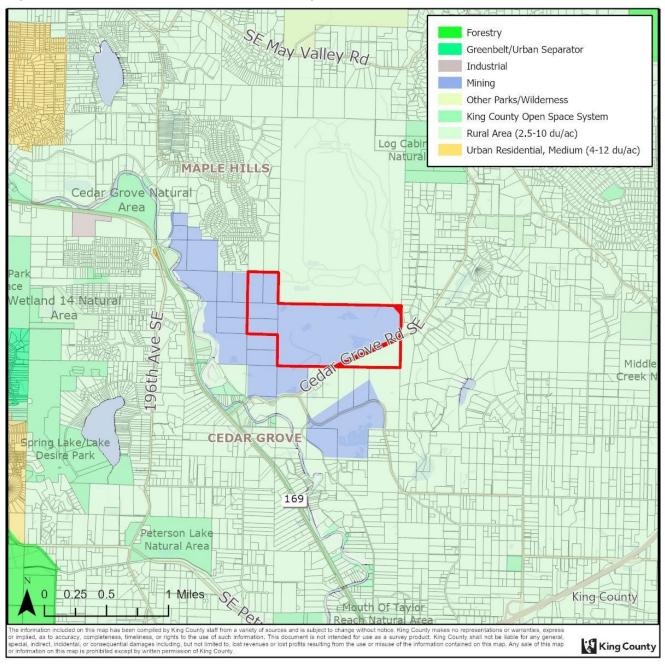
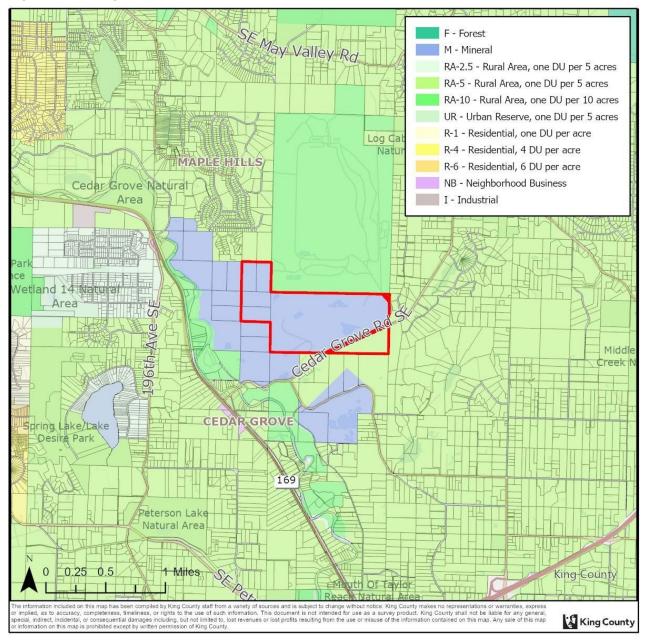




Figure 3 - Zoning



C. Current and Historical Uses

The two King County-owned parcels are designated as forest land pursuant to Chapter 84.33 RCW. They are vacant save for a utility corridor and associated utility infrastructure that transect the property from east to west.

The two First South-owned properties and the Queen City Farms parcel were previously used to mine gravel. The mining operation occurred from the 1970s until 1992 and the properties are currently in active reclamation processes with the County and the State.¹ The County reclamation process is occurring in three phases. As of May 2024, Phases 1 and 2 have been permitted and are underway, and Phase 3 is in the permitting process.²

From 1988, the northwest portion of the Queen City Farms parcel has been developed with a commercial composting facility owned by Cedar Grove, which processes organic waste from throughout the region. The Cedar Grove composting facility is classified as a Materials Processing Facility under King County Code (K.C.C.) Title 21A and is a legal nonconforming use in the Mineral (M) zone.

The Queen City Farms parcel is also identified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a Superfund site³ due to its historical use as a depository for various types of hazardous industrial and agricultural wastes. In 2015, a groundwater extraction and treatment system was constructed in the southeast portion of the site, and groundwater will continue to be monitored until cleanup levels are achieved. In 2020, EPA documented the completion of all soil cleanup actions.⁴

III. INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

Utilities: The Queen City Farms parcel, the only one of the five containing buildings, is served by a Group B water system and on-site septic. None of the five parcels are within the service area of any water district, although four of the parcels border the jurisdiction of King County Water District 90. The site is within King County Fire Protection District 10.

¹ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *Sixth Five-Year Review report for Queen City Farms Superfund Site*. September 2023. <u>https://semspub.epa.gov/work/10/100494859.pdf</u> ² CDDE15 0052 CDDE15 0214 CDDE18 0040

² GRDE15-0053; GRDE15-0214; GRDE18-0048

³ Superfund, officially known as Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA), is a U.S. EPA program that cleans up sites contaminated with hazardous waste.

⁴U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. "Superfund Site: Queen City Farms – Maple Valley Washington – Cleanup Activities." Accessed May 2024.

https://cumulis.epa.gov/supercpad/SiteProfiles/index.cfm?fuseaction=second.Cleanup&id=1000 835#bkground

The site is transected by a regional utility corridor through which is transported both electricity and natural gas.

Schools: The site is within the Issaquah School District #411. Maple Hills Elementary School is just over a half-mile northwest of the site.

Roads: Cedar Grove Rd SE transects the southeastern portion of the site, dividing the M-zoned portion of the Queen City Farms parcel from the RA-zoned portion. Cedar Grove Road SE is classified as a minor arterial. The site has access from 217th Ave SE, which is a private road intersecting Cedar Grove Ave SE, and which crosses another Queen City Farms-owned property (not part of the proposal site) before entering the site.

Transit: There is not transit service to this site. The nearest transit service is southwest of the site, on Renton-Maple Valley Road, which is served by Route 907. The nearest transit stop for this route is over a mile from the site.

IV. ENVIRONMENT AND CRITICAL AREAS

The Queen City Farms parcel contains a natural water body, known as Queen City Lake, which is roughly two acres in size. The parcel also contains several human-made water bodies that are related to the mining operation and the reclamation process.

A critical area notice on title was recorded as part of a 2019 grading permit. The notice on title identifies the following critical areas on the Queen City Farms parcel: steep slope hazard, unclassified wetland, category III wetland, type O aquatic area, wildlife habitat network, and critical aquifer recharge area. The other four properties do not have critical area notices on title, but King County iMap identifies potential coal mine hazards on portions of all four properties.

The Cedar River is approximately a quarter mile from the westernmost boundary of the site; smaller tributaries to the Cedar River may run downslope outside of the site's western boundary as well.

V. POLICY AND REGULATORY CONTEXT

A. King County Comprehensive Plan Policies

The following Comprehensive Plan policies, as proposed in Local Services and Land Use chair's striking amendment to the 2024 Comprehensive Plan legislation ("Chair's striker"),⁵ are relevant to the site and its potential uses:

⁵ <u>https://mkcclegisearch.kingcounty.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6445382&GUID=D52C8883-3290-43F7-86B4-AC5D10C49A7E&Options=Advanced&Search=</u>. Policy numbers reflect those in the Chair's striker.

Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction

E-202	King County shall reduce greenhouse gas emissions from its operations and				
	actions, including but not limited to, those associated with construction and				
	management of County-owned facilities, infrastructure development, transportation,				
	and environmental protection programs, to achieve the emissions reductions targets				
	set in E-203 and to work towards the carbon neutral goal in F-415.				
E-203	King County shall reduce total greenhouse gas emissions from government				
	operations, compared to a 2007 baseline, by at least 50 percent by 2025 and 80 percent by 2030.				
E-205	King County's Wastewater Treatment Division and Solid Waste Division shall each				
	independently achieve carbon neutral operations by 2025.				
E-208	King County shall, independently and in collaboration with cities and other partners,				
	adopt and implement policies and programs to achieve a target of reducing				
	countywide sources of greenhouse gas emissions, compared to a 2007 baseline, by				
	50 percent by 2030, 75 percent by 2040, and 95 percent by 2050, with net-zero				
	emissions through carbon sequestration and other strategies by that year. King				
	County shall evaluate and update these targets over time in consideration of the				
	latest international climate science and statewide targets aiming to limit the most				
	severe impacts of climate change and keep global warming under 1.5 degrees				
	Celsius.				

Renewable Energy Generation Generally

- E-209 King County should ensure that its land use policies, development and building regulations, technical assistance programs, and incentive programs support and encourage the use of viable renewable energy, energy efficiency, and fossil fuel reduction and transition technologies that produce zero or minimal greenhouse gas emissions, while considering equity and racial and social justice siting impacts.
- E-241 King County shall work with relevant industry sector partners to support efforts that reduce energy and fossil fuel use and greenhouse gas emissions, as well as to promote locally recognized high growth sectors such as green manufacturing, construction, transportation, and professional services in King County and the Puget Sound. The County shall also work with community groups, consumers, and the retail sector to promote the consumption and adoption of products and services supporting reduced energy use and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

- F-304 King County should make its public facilities and properties available for renewable energy production, such as community solar programs, when such use is compatible with the primary use of and any regulations associated with the facility.
- F-509 King County shall support the conversion of renewable resources and service by products to energy for beneficial use. King County shall claim and/or generate economic benefit for any and all renewable energy and greenhouse gas reduction attributes resulting from renewable energy generation.
- F-510 King County should encourage its energy utilities to provide energy efficiency services, renewable energy options, and fossil fuel use reduction strategies to all their customers. Additionally, the County should encourage the state and energy utilities to mitigate the environmental and greenhouse gas emissions impacts of energy and, as conservation and no- and low-carbon sources demonstrate capacity to address energy needs, phase out existing coal and other fossil fuel-based power plants, and replace such facilities with resource efficiency and renewable generation sources.

King County should support new energy resources and technologies that reduce energy use, support a resilient electrical grid, decarbonize energy sources, and electrify energy use in the building and transportation sectors. In supporting these efforts, King County should:

a. Allow for siting of green energy and distributed energy resources, while considering appropriate use of land and associated impacts, including protection of designated Natural Resource Lands and open spaces;

b. Accommodate the use of green energy and distributed energy resources, such as microgrids, in new and redeveloped properties;

c. Reduce barriers to new and upgraded substations, transmission facilities, and the distribution system, for infrastructure that is needed to achieve County greenhouse gas reductions targets;

d. Encourage and support the integration of new technologies and fuel sources;

e. Minimize negative impacts on and maximize benefits for frontline communities resulting from related projects;

f. Support equitable engagement strategies during project planning to actively solicit public participation and input from impacted frontline communities;

g. Support equitable opportunities for frontline communities to participate in distributed energy resources;

h. Focus especially on areas that are subject to frequent power outages;

i. Partner with first responders to ensure adequate safety measures are in place for people and the environment;

j. Support efforts by utilities and other entities to advance these outcomes; and

k. Review and update development regulations periodically to ensure that they appropriately support new energy resources and technologies and mitigate for associated impacts.

Waste-related Renewable Energy and Renewable Natural Gas

F-515

F-505 King County shall maximize the capture, use and marketing of renewable energy at its wastewater treatment plants and Cedar Hills Landfill, to the extent feasible and consistent with other County goals, and pursue other renewable energy generation projects where cost-effective.

F-506 King County shall provide leadership in, and foster the development and increased use of, clean, renewable, and alternative fuel and energy technologies, such as anaerobic digestion and co-digestion of organic material to create energy sources that result in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and fossil fuel use, with a particular emphasis on creating renewable natural gas.

- F-508 King County shall prioritize efficient energy consumption and conservation and maximize production and use of renewable natural gas, electricity, and heat, while ensuring that land use decisions regarding siting of renewable energy facilities consider potential impacts to open space, agriculture, and housing needs.
- F-522 King County should work to remove barriers to the availability and efficient use of renewable natural gas.

Energy Facilities and Infrastructure

F-518 To address the cumulative effects of multiple energy facilities, King County should continue to participate in the state and federal processes for licensing, authorizing, or certifying, and any such renewals, of existing and proposed power generation projects within King County. King County's review of individual projects in the state and federal processes should consider consistency with designated land uses and environmental protection goals. Specifically, power generation projects should: a. Have climate change impacts considered and mitigated to the greatest extent practical;

b. Be consistent with, and preferably directly incorporated in, utility integrated Resource Plans;

- c. Use renewable resources to the greatest extent practical;
- d. Include public engagement;
- e. Not significantly interfere with commercial forestry operations;
- f. Be located and operated in a manner such that impacts to salmonid fish and wildlife are minimized;
- g. Avoid unstable and erosion-prone areas;
- h. Include performance bonding to fund erosion control;
- i. Provide full mitigation for construction and operation impacts;
- j. Avoid, to the extent feasible, diminishing scenic values;
- k. Incorporate adequate public safety measures; and
- I. In the case of hydropower, not be located within a Protected Area as designated by the Northwest Power and Conservation Council.

Solid Waste

F-434	Solid waste should be collected, handled, processed, and disposed of in ways that reduce waste, conserve resources, and protect public health and the environment.	
F-440	King County should maximize the capacity and lifespan of the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill and plan for future disposal when Cedar Hills Landfill closes to ensure no	
	gap in service, subject to environmental constraints, relative costs to operate,	

	partner and public interests, and overall solid waste system optimization. The County shall not seek to site a replacement landfill in King County for the Cedar Hills regional landfill.
F-436	King County shall plan for and operate a regional transfer system that is dispersed throughout the county to ensure access to safe, reliable, efficient, and affordable solid waste services, and improves recycling opportunities for residents and businesses. King County should continue to provide facilities for self-haulers.
Rural Area	
R-321	 Nonresidential uses in the Rural Area shall be consistent with the other applicable policies in this chapter and limited to those that: a. Provide convenient local products and services for nearby residents; b. Require location in a Rural Area; c. Support the economic vitality of natural resource-based industries; d. Provide adaptive reuse of significant historic resources; e. Provide recreational or tourism opportunities that are compatible with the surrounding Rural Area; f. Provide or support infrastructure for nearby residents; or g. In Rural Towns and on industrial-zoned properties, involve commercial or manufacturing-related development.
R-322	Nonresidential uses in the Rural Area shall be sited, sized, and landscaped to complement rural character, prevent impacts to the environment, and function with rural services, including on-site wastewater disposal.
R-329	Renewable energy technologies may be sited in the Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands, as appropriate. Development standards should ensure that the siting, scale, and design of these facilities respect and support rural character.

R-332 In the Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands, standards and plans for utility service should be consistent with long-term, low-density development and resource industries. Utility facilities that serve the Urban Growth Area but must be located in the Rural Area or on Natural Resource Lands (for example, a pipeline from a municipal watershed) should be designed and scaled to serve primarily the Urban Growth Area. Sewers needed to serve the previously established Redmond Ridge, Redmond Ridge East, and Trilogy neighborhoods, Cities in the Rural Area, Rural Towns, or new or existing schools pursuant to R-325 and F-452 shall be tightlined and have access restrictions precluding service to other lands in the Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands.

Mineral Resources

- R-794 The preferred adjacent land uses to sites designated as Mining on the Land Use Map are mineral extraction, industrial, open space, or forestry uses. Sites for newly proposed Mineral zones shall not be adjacent to or within Agricultural Production Districts. Agricultural lands and operations should be protected from significant impacts associated with nearby mineral extraction operations.
- R-797 King County should prevent or minimize conflicts with mineral extraction when planning land uses adjacent to designated Mineral Resource Sites and Potential Surface Mineral Resource Sites. Subarea plans or area zoning and land use studies may indicate areas where Mining is an inappropriate land use designation. designated Mineral Resource Sites and Potential Surface Mineral Resource Sites and Nonconforming Mineral Resource Sites should be shown on the Mineral Resources Map to notify nearby property owners and residents of existing and prospective mineral extraction activities.
- R-800 Where mineral extraction or mining are subject to state or federal regulations, King County should work with the state and federal governments to ensure that proposals are reviewed with consideration of local land use and environmental requirements, regional impacts from transport, and assessment of climate change impacts from end use of minerals and mined materials.
- R-801 King County should work with the Washington State Department of Natural Resources to ensure that mining areas are reclaimed in a timely and appropriate manner. Reclamation of mineral extraction or mining sites in the Forest Production District should return the land to forestry. Where mineral extraction is completed in phases, reclamation also should be completed in phases as the resource is depleted. When reclamation of mineral extraction sites located outside of the Forest Production District is completed, the site should be considered for redesignation to

a land use designation and zoning classification compatible with the surrounding properties.

B. Countywide Planning Policies and Multicounty Planning Policies

The following Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) are relevant to the site and its potential uses:

EN-4 Encourage the transition to a sustainable energy future by reducing demand through efficiency and conservation, supporting the development of energy management technology, and meeting reduced needs from sustainable sources.

EN-33 Support the production and storage of clean renewable energy.

DP-62 Ensure that extractive industries and industrial-scale operations on resource lands maintain environmental quality, minimize negative impacts on adjacent lands, and that an appropriate level of reclamation occurs prior to redesignation.

PF-14 Reduce the solid waste stream and encourage reuse and recycling.

PF-16 Invest in and promote the use of low-carbon, renewable, and alternative energy resources to help meet the county's long-term energy needs, reduce environmental impacts associated with traditional energy supplies, and increase community sustainability.

The following Multicounty Planning Policies (MPPs) are relevant to the site and its potential uses:

MPP-CC-1 Advance the adoption and implementation of actions that substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions in support of state, regional, and local emissions reduction goals, including targets adopted by the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency.

MPP-CC-3 Reduce greenhouse gases by expanding the use of conservation and alternative energy sources, electrifying the transportation system, and reducing vehicle miles traveled by increasing alternatives to driving alone.

MPP-DP-37 Ensure that development occurring in rural areas is rural in character and is focused into communities and activity areas.

MPP-PS-6 Encourage the design of public facilities and utilities in rural areas to be at a size and scale appropriate to rural locations, so as not to increase development pressure.

MPP-PS-8 Develop conservation measures to reduce solid waste and increase recycling.

MPP-PS-15 Support the necessary investments in utility infrastructure to facilitate moving to low-carbon energy sources.

C. Underlying Zoning and Zone Purpose

The majority of the site has M zoning. Four of the five parcels have M zoning only, and the Queen City Farms parcel has M zoning on roughly 275 acres of the parcel, with the approximately 40 acres of the parcel south of Cedar Grove Road SE having RA-5 zoning.

K.C.C. 21A.04.050 describes the purpose of the mineral zone in unincorporated King County:

A. The purpose of the mineral zone (M) is to provide for continued extraction and processing of mineral and soil resources in an environmentally responsible manner by:

1. Reserving known deposits of minerals and materials within areas as protection against premature development of the land for non-extractive purposes;

2. Providing neighboring properties with notice of prospective extracting and processing activities; and

3. Providing appropriate location and development standards for extraction and on-site processing to mitigate adverse impacts on the natural environment and on nearby properties.

B. Use of this zone is appropriate for known deposits of minerals and materials on sites that are of sufficient size to mitigate the impacts of operation and that are served or capable of being served at the time of development by adequate roads and other public services; and for sites containing mineral extracting and processing operations that were established in compliance with land use regulations in effect at the time the use was established.

K.C.C. 21A.04.060 describes the purpose of the rural area zones in unincorporated King County. The language is proposed to be updated in the Chair's striker, as shown here:

A. The purpose of the rural zone (RA) is to provide for an area-wide long-term rural character and to minimize land use conflicts with nearby agricultural or forest production districts or mineral extraction sites. These purposes are accomplished by:

1. Limiting residential densities and allowed uses to those that are compatible with rural character and nearby resource production districts and sites and are able to be adequately supported by rural service levels;

2. Allowing small-scale farming and forestry activities and tourism and recreation uses that can be supported by rural service levels and that are compatible with rural character;

3. Increasing required setbacks to minimize conflicts with adjacent agriculture, forest, or mineral zones; and

4. Requiring tracts created through clustering to be designated as permanent open space or as permanent resource use.

D. Allowed Uses

The Green Energy Overlay would change required approvals for a discrete set of utility-related uses related to green energy generation and waste management. The uses are shown in the table below, with their permit requirements in the Chair's striker for both the M zone and the RA-5 zone generally, as well as their proposed permit requirements with the overlay. Uses named in the overlay would also not be subject to any use-specific conditions under K.C.C. 21A.08. Uses would still be subject to environmental review under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), including review, public notice, and possible permit conditions to mitigate adverse impacts.

Use Classification in K.C.C. 21A	Requirements in M Zone in Chair's Striker	Requirements in RA Zone in Chair's Striker	Requirements in Proposed Green Energy Special District Overlay
Nonhydroelectric Generation Facility	Conditional Use Permit if renewable gas production only; Special Use Permit if electricity generated onsite.	Conditional Use Permit if renewable gas production only; Special Use Permit if electricity generated onsite.	Permitted Use; Conditional Use if green hydrogen production
Anaerobic Digester ⁶	Conditional Use Permit	Conditional Use Permit ⁷	Permitted Use
Local Distribution Gas Storage Tank Energy Resource Recovery Facility	Conditional Use Permit Special Use Permit	Conditional Use Permit Special Use Permit	Permitted Use when in support of biogas Conditional Use Permit when
raciiity			supportive of regional solid waste system, recycling, or diversion
Transfer Station	Special Use Permit	Special Use Permit	Conditional Use Permit when supportive of regional solid waste system, recycling, or diversion

⁶ Would be a newly defined use in the Chair's striker; requirements for M and RA zone reflect the allowances for these zones in the Chair's striker.

⁷ In the Chair's striker, would allowed as a Permitted Use in the RA zone under certain circumstances that do not apply here.

Use Classification in K.C.C. 21A	Requirements in M Zone in Chair's Striker	Requirements in RA Zone in Chair's Striker	Requirements in Proposed Green Energy Special District Overlay
Landfill	Special Use Permit	Special Use Permit	Conditional Use Permit when supportive of regional solid waste system, recycling, or diversion
Interim Recycling Facility	Not Allowed	Permitted Use in limited circumstances ⁸	Conditional Use Permit when supportive of regional solid waste system, recycling, or diversion

The uses proposed for changes are all currently allowed within both the M zone and the RA-5 zone, with the exception of Interim Recycling Facility, which is not allowed in the M-zone, and is only allowed in the RA-5 zone in limited circumstances. As the other uses are already allowed in the zones, the policy consideration for Councilmembers is whether the proposed changes to permit requirements are appropriate for this site, rather than the allowance for the uses generally.

E. Mining Site Reclamation

As noted above, portions of the site are actively undergoing reclamation through both state and local processes. The proposed special district overlay would require that uses and development within the mineral extraction portion of the overlay comply with state and county reclamation requirements. Therefore, any development could not impede or otherwise interfere with the ongoing reclamation, which must continue in accordance with state and local laws.

Although mineral extraction is complete, since reclamation is ongoing, redesignation and rezoning of the property to another zoning classification would not be consistent with the KCCP at this point in time. However, when reclamation is complete, King County Comprehensive Plan policy R-801 encourages the County to consider redesignation to a land use designation and zoning classification compatible with the surrounding properties. As the surrounding properties have RA-5 or RA-10 classifications, compatibility with those zones is a consideration.

⁸ The limited circumstances listed in K.C.C. 21A.08.050 would not apply here.

VI. POLICY OPTIONS

Policy options for the Council to consider include:

- 1. Add the Green Energy Special District Overlay to the five parcels covered by this study.
- 2. Add the Green Energy Special District Overlay to some, but not all, the parcels covered by this study.
- 3. Modify the terms of the Green Energy Special District Overlay, by actions such as:
 - a. Adding or removing uses named in the overlay; or
 - b. Modifying the type of permit required, or permit conditions applying to, one or more uses named in the overlay.
- 4. Do not approve the addition of the Green Energy Special District Overlay.