



## **Snoqualmie Interchange Area Zoning and Land Use Study**

December 2023

### **I. Overview**

The Scope of Work<sup>1</sup> for the 2024 update to the King County Comprehensive Plan (KCCP)<sup>2</sup> (2024 Update) includes the following direction:

**Conduct a land use and zoning study for the Snoqualmie Interchange, and area north of I-90 impacted by the new Interstate 90/Highway 18 Interchange. The study should include, at a minimum, review and recommendation of the appropriate zoning for properties abutting the urban growth area boundary. The study should include the properties west of Snoqualmie Way along SE 99<sup>th</sup> that could have access to urban services, including whether the area should be included inside the urban growth area, and should recognize and protect the forested visual character of the Mountains to Sound National Scenic byway on Interstate 90 as well as provide appropriate conservation mitigation for any newly allowed development. The land use and zoning study and land use designations and zoning classifications should focus on solutions for the northwest corner while planning a vision for the properties on the northeast portions abutting the urban growth area. The study should include a review of whether affordable housing and/or behavioral health support services and/or facilities could locate in this area. The study should also ensure potential trail connections for regional trails and adhere to current King County policies. The Executive should collaborate with the City of Snoqualmie, Affected Tribes, Washington state DOT, DNR, property owners, Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust, regional partners and the community.**

Per Footnote 58 found in the Scope of Work: "This request is like a required study in Chapter 11 of the KCCP, to be done with the Snoqualmie Valley/NE King County Community Service Area Subarea Plan. The County intends to complete the work in Chapter 11 and this scope of work

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<sup>1</sup> [Motion 16142](#)

<sup>2</sup> [King County Comprehensive Plan](#)

with the Subarea Plan. The entire text is included in the scope of work for context, but if the study requirement in this scope of work is completed with the Subarea Plan, it need not be included in the 2024 update." Given this, both requirements are addressed in the 2024 Update and not in the Subarea Plan.

## **II. Background**

A 1990 Interlocal Agreement between King County and the City of Snoqualmie identified the study area as a joint planning area.<sup>3</sup> The implementation of the Snoqualmie Preservation Initiative in 2001<sup>4</sup> resolved the joint planning area and the urban growth area boundary around the City. Although the Interchange area was removed from the joint planning area as part of the Initiative, the study area has since been reviewed for possible conversion from rural to urban during the 2008,<sup>5</sup> 2012,<sup>6</sup> and 2016<sup>7</sup> Comprehensive Plan updates. In each instance, the determination by the County was to preserve the study area's current rural area land use designation and zoning classification and to keep the Urban Growth Area (UGA) boundary in its current location.

### **A. 2008 Comprehensive Plan**

A March 2008 Area Zoning Study evaluated two docket proposals<sup>8</sup> for the same geography this 2023 study analyzes, including 73 acres of proposed nonresidential development on parcels east of Snoqualmie Parkway.

The 2008 study determined that: "including these areas within the UGA and approval of these developments will bring pressure to bear on adjacent Rural Areas to the east and west to also seek redesignation to urban. Intensive development on the properties north of I-90 at the intersection of SR-18 would have a negative impact on this intersection within the Mountains to Sound Greenway."

The docket requests were denied, and the decision was made to retain the rural land use designation and zoning for the study area.

### **B. 2012 Comprehensive Plan**

In response to a 2010 Docket request,<sup>9</sup> the Scoping Motion<sup>10</sup> for the 2012 Comprehensive Plan update directed the County to "Revisit the issue of whether or not to convert land on the north side of Interstate 90 at Highway 18 from Rural to Urban."

A March 2012 Area Zoning Study evaluated the docket request, including the City of Snoqualmie's claims that a lack of commercial land within the city justified expansion of the UGA boundary. The 2012 Study determined that the Growth Management Act and Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) did not support the City's position.

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<sup>3</sup> [Motion 7819](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Ordinance 14117](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Ordinance 16263](#); Area Zoning Study; study available upon request.

<sup>6</sup> [Ordinance 17485](#); [Area Zoning Studies](#), pp. 86-92

<sup>7</sup> [Ordinance 18427](#); [Area Zoning Studies](#), pp. 33-43

<sup>8</sup> [2006 Docket](#): #22 and #23. [2007 Docket](#): #1.

<sup>9</sup> [2010 Docket](#): #1

<sup>10</sup> [Motion 13475](#), Attachment A

The 2010 docket request was denied, and the decision was made to retain the rural land use designation and zoning for the study area. The City subsequently sued the County. On appeal, the Growth Management Hearings Board and subsequently the Thurston County Superior Court both affirmed the County's decision.

### C. 2016 Comprehensive Plan

In the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, study of the Snoqualmie Interchange was included in the adopted Scope of Work and a Docket request was submitted. A March 2016 Area Zoning Study was conducted. This Study primarily considered parcels on the northwest corner of the Interchange.

The 2016 study differed in some measure from the 2008 and 2012 studies because it was based on the 2012 CPPs, which changed and limited the conditions under which UGA amendments could be considered. The docket request was for an expansion of the UGA without any corresponding preservation of dedicated open space. Nevertheless, the 2016 study evaluated the potential for the UGA boundary expansion using the County's Four-to-One Program,<sup>12</sup> but found that because the Interchange area was not adjacent to the original UGA boundary adopted in the 1994 King County Comprehensive Plan, it was not eligible to use the program to make the parcels urban.

The 2016 Study also considered the 2008 and 2012 analyses, as well as the conditions in the 2001 Snoqualmie Urban Growth Area Subarea Plan. And the 2016 Study referenced the Growth Board and Superior Court decisions that affirmed the County's decision as part of the 2012 Comprehensive Plan to retain the UGA boundary and rural designation.

The docket request was denied, and the decision was made to retain the rural land use designation and zoning for the study area.

## III. Land Use Information

### A. Parcel and Vicinity Information

| Parcel Number | Property Name/Ownership     | Land Use Designation | Zoning Classification | Development Conditions | Acreage | Present Use            |
|---------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|
| 0223079046    | 1890 PARTNERS LLC           | ra                   | RA-5                  | none                   | 4.1     | Vacant (Single-family) |
| 0223079075    | 1890 PARTNERS LLC           | ra                   | RA-5                  | none                   | 0.7     | Vacant (Single-family) |
| 0223079063    | 1890 PARTNERS LLC           | ra                   | RA-5                  | none                   | 7.1     | Vacant (Single-family) |
| 0223079090    | 1890 PARTNERS LLC           | ra                   | RA-5                  | none                   | 0.2     | Vacant (Single-family) |
| 0223079033    | WSDOT                       | ra                   | RA-5                  | none                   | 0.02    | Vacant (Single-family) |
| 7462900110    | JSA INVESTMENT LLC          | ra                   | RA-5                  | none                   | 31.6    | Vacant (Single-family) |
| 0223079049    | KING CO PUB HOSPITAL DIST N | ra                   | RA-5                  | none                   | 20.9    | Governmental Service   |
| 0223079007    | HOU JUNYU+JIANG SHUQIN      | ra                   | RA-5                  | none                   | 5.0     | Vacant (Single-family) |

| Parcel Number | Property Name/Ownership     | Land Use Designation | Zoning Classification | Development Conditions | Acreage | Present Use            |
|---------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|
| 0223079064    | HOU JUNYU+JIANG SHUQIN      | ra                   | RA-5                  | none                   | 5.0     | Vacant (Single-family) |
| 0223079088    | GOOD RV REAL ESTATE DEVELOP | ra                   | RA-5                  | none                   | 5.0     | Vacant (Single-family) |
| 0223079089    | GOOD RV REAL ESTATE DEVELOP | ra                   | RA-5                  | none                   | 5.0     | Vacant (Single-family) |
| 022307UNKN    | N/A                         | ra                   | RA-5                  | none                   | 0       | N/A                    |

The study area is south of the City of Snoqualmie city limits and the UGA boundary and north of the Interstate 90 (I-90) and State Route 18 (SR-18) Interchange. The study area is on both the east and west sides of Snoqualmie Parkway. The study area covers approximately 85 acres, with 12 acres on the west side of Snoqualmie Parkway and 73 acres on the east side. Nine parcels owned by six different property owners make up the study area.

The properties in the study area are designated "ra" (Rural Area) in the King County Comprehensive Plan and are zoned RA-5 (Rural Area, one dwelling unit per five acres). RA zones, per King County Code (K.C.C.)<sup>11</sup> 21A.04.060, have the purpose of providing area-wide long-term rural character and minimizing conflicts to adjacent resource lands through means including limiting residential densities and permitted uses.

The zoning of adjacent parcels is as follows:

- East: RA-2.5 (Rural Area, one dwelling unit per 2.5 acres)
- West: RA-5
- South: RA-5 and RA-2.5 (south of I-90)
- North: Mixed Use and Residential (City of Snoqualmie)

The parcels in the study area range in size from 0.02 acres to 31.6 acres. The median and average lot size are 7.7 acres and five acres, respectively. To the east of the study area, there is a cluster of smaller lots with an average lot size of 1.25 acres that were established prior to the 1994 Comprehensive Plan. To the west of the study area, there are several parcels with an average size of over 20 acres. The parcels south of I-90 range in size from 0.13 acres to 56 acres with an average of six acres. The parcels to the north are within the City of Snoqualmie's incorporated city limits and the UGA boundary. The lots in the City of Snoqualmie have an average size of 0.7 acres, with the eight-acre hospital property and several stormwater parcels included.

The study area is vacant, except for the parcel owned by King County Hospital District #4 (parcel 0223079049). This property was a former private recreational vehicle park and campground. Since 2018, King County Search and Rescue Association (KCSARA) has been using the property to store search and rescue equipment, vehicles, and as a mobile office.

The study area is in the Mountains to Sound Greenway, a National Scenic Byway and a National Heritage Area along I-90 that has been the focus of a major regional effort to preserve the natural scenic character of the corridor. Comprehensive Plan policy T-316 states that "King

<sup>11</sup> [King County Code](#)

County shall support and encourage the preservation and enhancement of scenic, historic, and recreational resources along the designated Washington Scenic and Recreational Highways located in the county, including I-90 (Mountains to Sound Greenway)" and others.

## **B. Infrastructure and Services**

### **General**

According to King County Assessor data, the parcels in the study area are outside any sewer district, water district, or parks and recreation district. The former camping park is served by a private on-site septic system and water well. The parcels are within the Snoqualmie Valley #410 School District and Public Hospital District #4.

At this time, the nearly vacant parcels require little if any services from King County or other service providers. The only use in the study area, by KCSARA, is intermittent and self-sufficient. Water and sewer services are present within the City of Snoqualmie's boundaries to the north, but not in the study area.

### **Transportation**

Since 2016, WSDOT has planned and completed a design for improvements to the I-90 and SR-18<sup>12</sup> Interchange, adjacent to the southern edge of the study area. Construction on the Interchange improvements began in April 2023 and is expected to take between two to three years to complete. The \$188 million project aims to "address performance deficiencies and address community concerns around safety. The Interchange was designed to accommodate demand based on the city and county land use plans adopted at the time of design (2019)."<sup>13</sup>

In a September 22, 2023, letter<sup>14</sup> to the Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC) related to the GMPC's consideration of countywide UGA expansion policies, WSDOT expressed "serious concerns that separate but interrelated planning decisions" in and around the City of Snoqualmie "will result in significant, cumulative impacts on the operation of WSDOT facilities, including the performance of the new \$188 million SR-18/I-90 Interchange investment, and ultimately the users of the transportation system in the Snoqualmie Valley." WSDOT stated further that "any higher intensity urban development up to and around the I90/SR-18 Interchange and along I-90 has the potential to significantly degrade the safety and performance of the Interchange area."

On the east side of Snoqualmie Parkway and the north boundary of study area, SE 96<sup>th</sup> Street provides access to 40 RA-2.5-zoned parcels located to the east of the study area. SE 96<sup>th</sup> Street then continues into a large RA-5-zoned area where it becomes a private, gravel road and branches multiple times to serve as access to approximately 25 privately-owned, rural-residential properties. Also on the east side of Snoqualmie Parkway, a short, private segment of SE 99<sup>th</sup> Street extends into the study area and provides access to the former camping park and several of the parcels adjacent to the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) right-of-way.

On the west side of Snoqualmie Parkway, SE 99<sup>th</sup> Street forms the northern boundary of the study area. SE 99<sup>th</sup> Street provides vehicular access to the Snoqualmie Valley Hospital on the

<sup>12</sup> [LINK](#)

<sup>13</sup> Package of Letters to GMPC on UGA Policy and Four to One Program Review; [WSDOT letter](#); pp 35-38.

<sup>14</sup> [WSDOT letter](#) to GMPC from September 2023

northeast side of SE 99<sup>th</sup> Street (north of the study area) and several parcels owned by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and containing the Echo Glen Children's Center (Echo Glen). The hospital is located within the incorporated city limits of Snoqualmie, while Echo Glen is in rural, unincorporated King County.

The study area is within a travel shed that passes transportation concurrency. Snoqualmie Parkway between SE 99<sup>th</sup> Street and the I-90 Interchange is in unincorporated King County; Snoqualmie Parkway north of SE 99<sup>th</sup> Street is within and maintained by the City of Snoqualmie. The King County Road Services Division previously managed a small amount of roadway in the immediate vicinity of the designated area, south of SE 99<sup>th</sup> St, but that was transferred to WSDOT in 2022.

If future development impacts intersection function at SE 99<sup>th</sup> St and Snoqualmie Parkway, it would necessitate a discussion between the developer and the City of Snoqualmie. The first 1,090 feet of SE 99<sup>th</sup> Street west of Snoqualmie Parkway and the first 3,785 feet of SE 96<sup>th</sup> Street east of Snoqualmie Parkway are unincorporated King County roads. The remaining roads are under the jurisdiction of the City of Snoqualmie, WSDOT, or are privately owned. The two county roads are local (non-arterial) roads. No long-term needs were identified on these roads in the current adopted 2020 or draft proposed 2024 Transportation Needs Report, which is part of the Comprehensive Plan and is the County's list of known long-term, anticipated transportation needs.

King County Metro (Metro) operates Route 208 that uses Snoqualmie Parkway to travel from Issaquah to North Bend, with stops in the City of Snoqualmie along Snoqualmie Parkway. The stop nearest the study area is at the intersection of Snoqualmie Parkway and SE Jacobia Street, about 0.2 miles north of the UGA boundary.

### **C. Environmental Conditions and Constraints**

The study area is within the Raging River Basin. Elevations range from approximately 1080 feet above sea level in the northeast corner of the study area, to approximately 940 feet above sea level in the southwest corner of the area. Surface water flows generally from north to south across the study area, through several wetlands and streams.

A 2022 wetland reconnaissance study on parcel 0223079049 (the Hospital District Offices site) showed five wetlands within or adjacent to (potential buffers within) the parcel.<sup>15</sup> The wetlands range from Categories I to III, and habitat scores were between six and seven. As of November 2023, standard buffer widths for these wetlands, per K.C.C. 21A.24.325.A.1., were estimated at 150 feet with a 15-foot building setback. The 2022 study also shows two streams within and adjacent to parcel 0223079049. The streams are both Type F. As of November 2023, the standards buffer widths for these streams, per K.C.C. 21A.24.358, were estimated at 165 feet with a 15-foot building setback. Updates to buffer widths are anticipated as part of the County's update to critical area regulations in the 2024 Update, which might change this analysis.

There are no mapped seismic or landslide hazards in the study area, although all parcels are mapped with some degree of erosion hazard. The eastern portions of parcels 7462900110 and 0223079049 have areas considered steep slope hazard areas. Other steep slope hazard areas

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<sup>15</sup> The Watershed Company, "Parcel #0223079049, Reconnaissance Study," September 30, 2022; Emailed from KCSARA on 10/3/22

exist in the Snoqualmie Parkway right-of-way. No floodway or floodplain conditions are present on the properties. The properties slope downward from the northeast to the southwest.

Per DNR Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) mapping, wildfire risk has been identified in almost the entire study area.<sup>16</sup> Intermix WUI constitutes most of the areas both east and west of the Snoqualmie Parkway. Interface WUI exists in the northwestern portion of parcel 7462900110. In July 2022, the King County Executive issued its first Wildfire Risk Reduction Strategy, a set of 12 recommended actions to improve preparedness, response, and recovery as wildfire risk increases in rural areas of King County.<sup>17</sup> These actions include advancing wildfire risk reduction through effective policies, plans, and codes that promote or otherwise remove or reduce conflicts with best practices that reduce wildfire risk and improve public safety.

Noxious weeds have been detected along the roadways bordering the study area, specifically along SE 96<sup>th</sup> Street and Snoqualmie Parkway. The most common weed found during the 2023 season was *Senecio jacobaea* (Tansey Ragwort). *Geranium lucidum* (Shiny Geranium) and *Hieracium aurantiacum* (Orange Hawkweed) were also found during the 2023 season along Snoqualmie Parkway.

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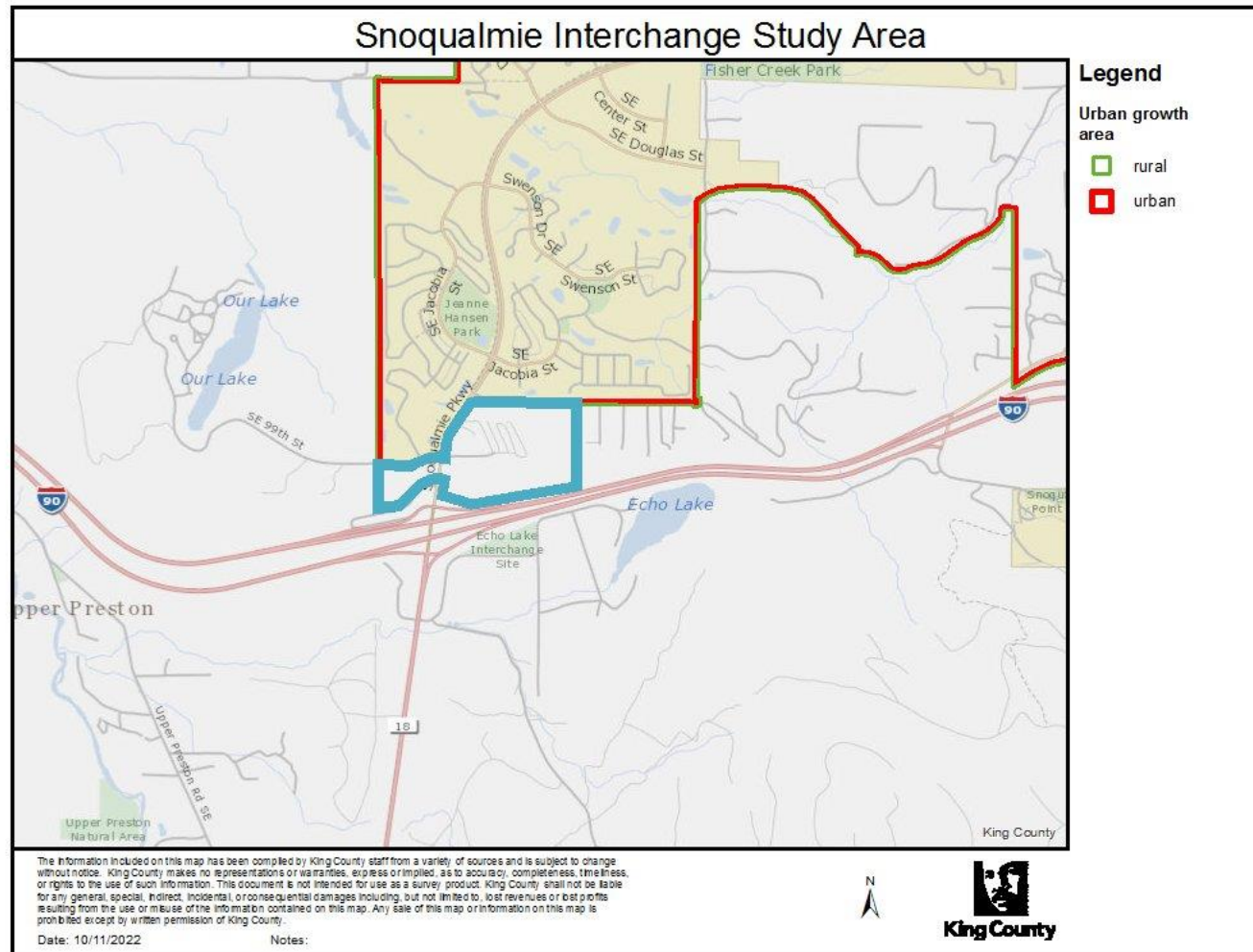
<sup>16</sup> [Wildland Urban Interface \(WUI\) | Washington State Geospatial Open Data Portal](#)

<sup>17</sup> [king-county-wildfire-strategy-report.pdf \(kingcounty.gov\)](#)



## D. Maps and Photos

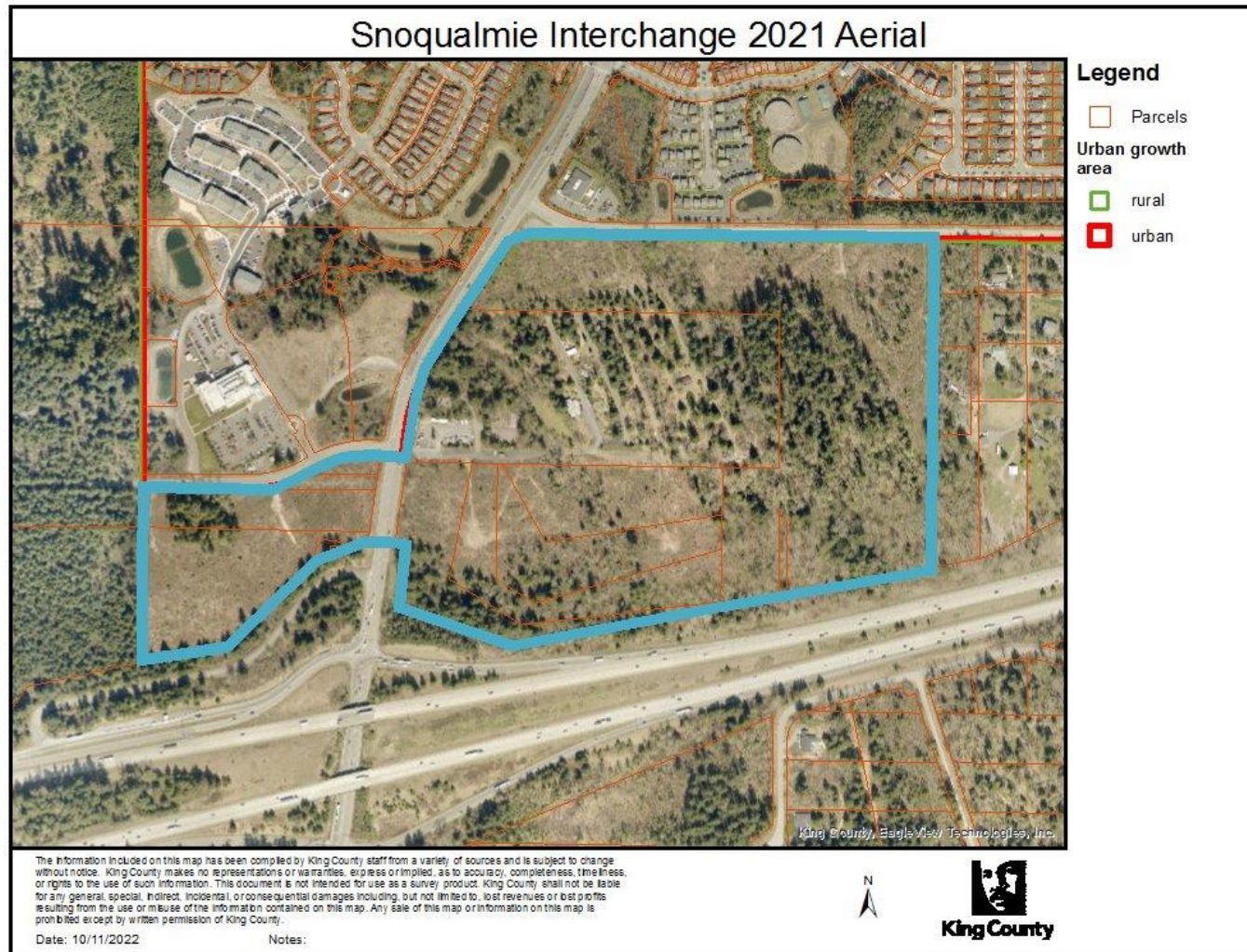
### 1. Vicinity Map<sup>18</sup>



<sup>18</sup> [iMap \(kingcounty.gov\)](https://www.kingcounty.gov/iMap)

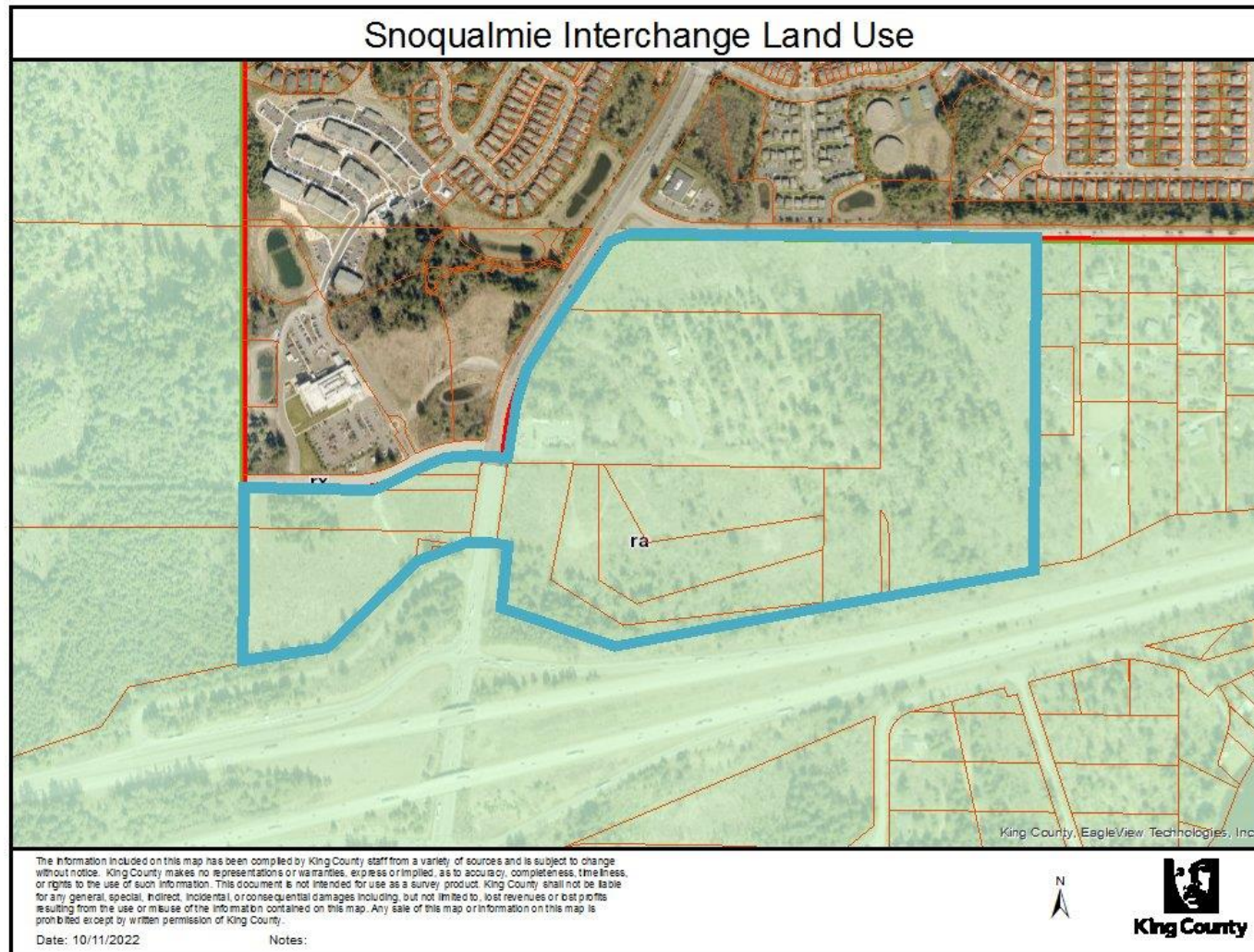


## 2. Aerial Site Map<sup>19</sup>



<sup>19</sup> ibid

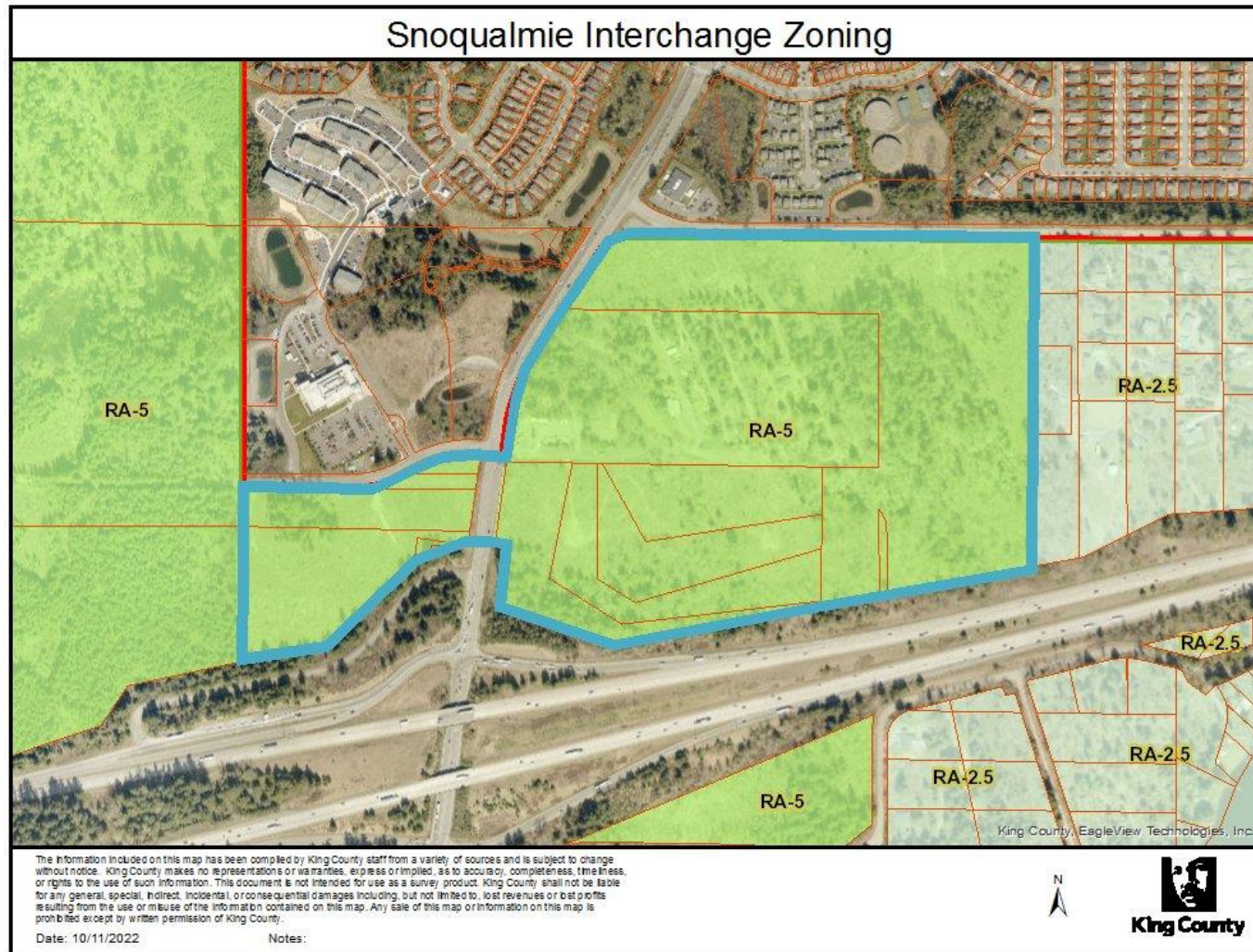
### 3. Land Use Map<sup>20</sup>



<sup>20</sup> ibid

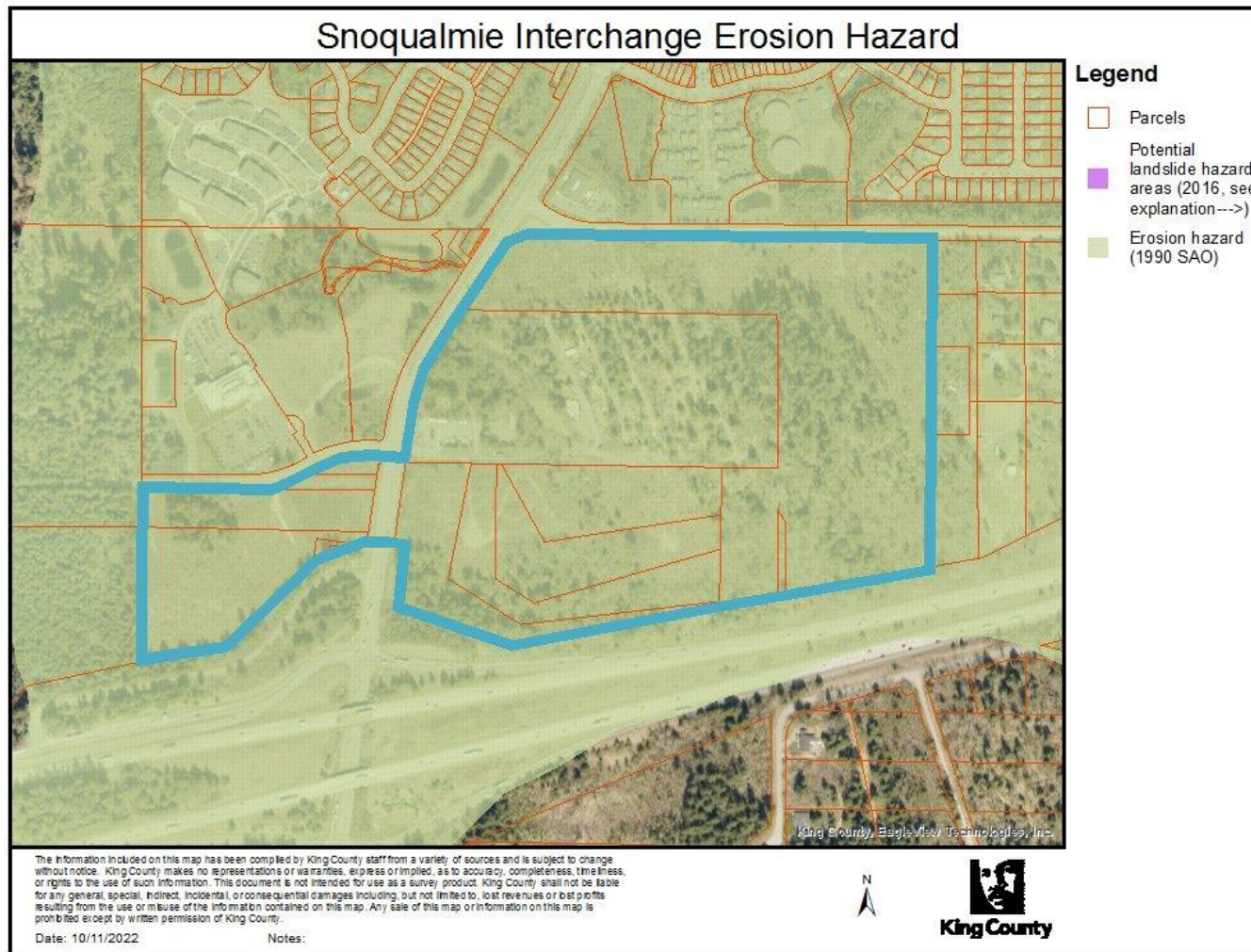


#### 4. Zoning Map<sup>21</sup>



<sup>21</sup> *ibid*

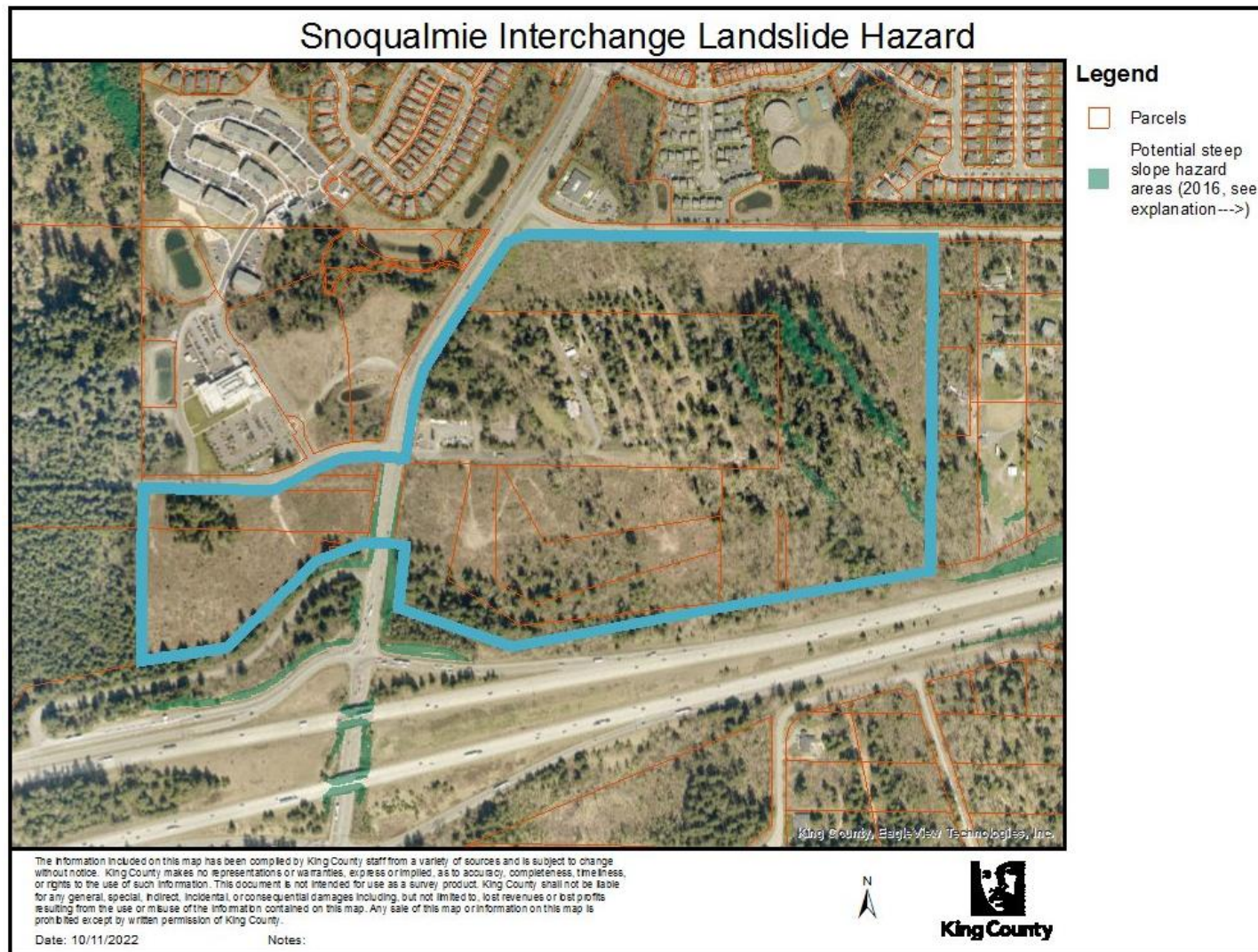
## 5. Erosion Hazard Map<sup>22</sup>



<sup>22</sup> *ibid*

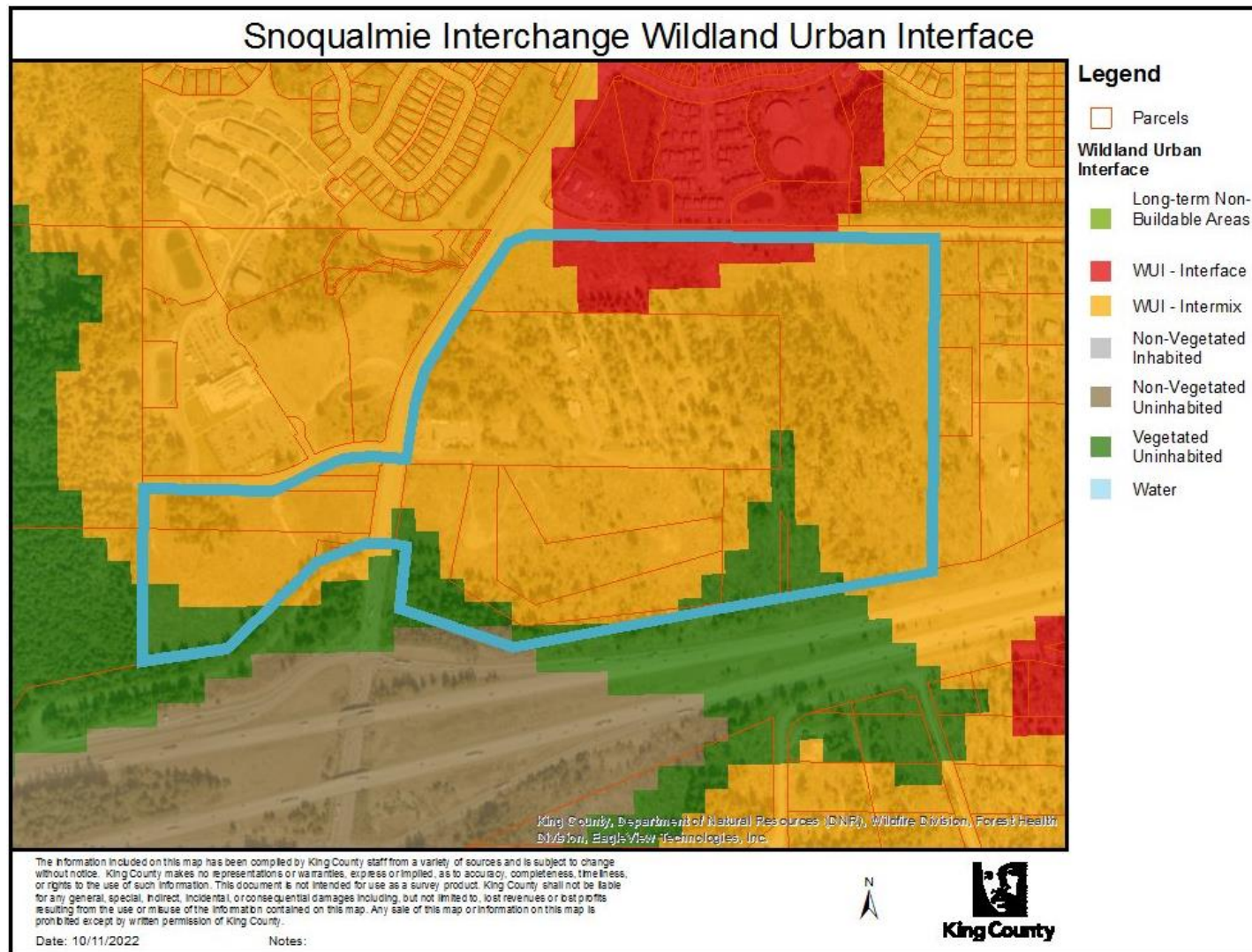


## 6. Steep Slopes Map<sup>23</sup>



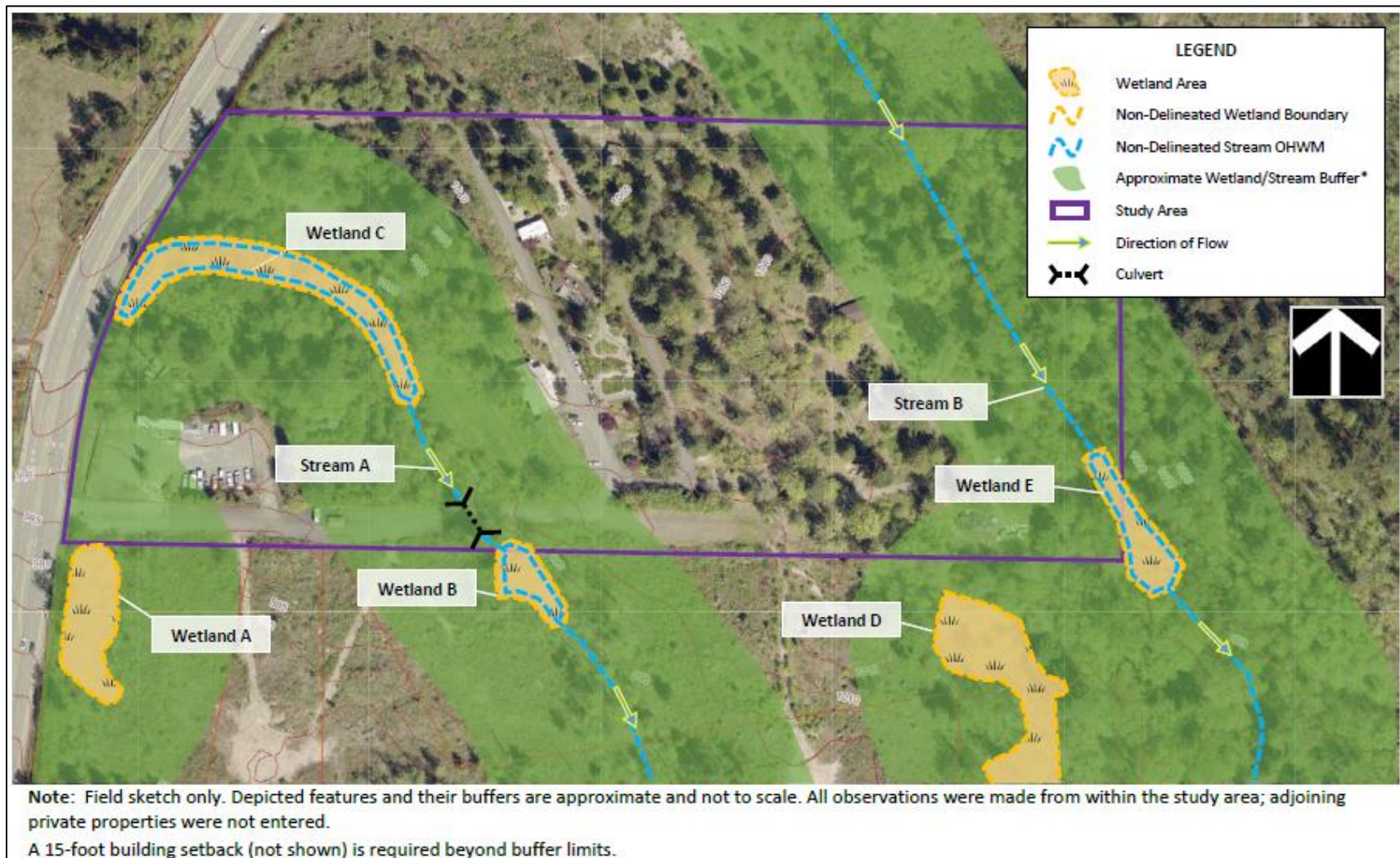
<sup>23</sup> ibid

7. Wildland Urban Interface Map<sup>24</sup>



<sup>24</sup> ibid



8. Wetland and Stream Reconnaissance Sketch Parcel 0223079049 <sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> "Wetland and Stream Reconnaissance Sketch – King County Search and Rescue Headquarters," The Watershed Company, site visit October 22, 2021.



## IV. Regulatory Context and Analysis

Key adopted policies and regulations relevant to this study include: VISION 2050 / Multicounty Planning Policies (MPPs)<sup>26</sup>, 2021 CPPs;<sup>27</sup> 2016 Comprehensive Plan, as amended;<sup>28</sup> and the King County Code. These policies and regulations put into practice the goals of the Growth Management Act (GMA) to retain and enhance open space, habitat and recreation, protect the environment, and reduce sprawl and focus growth in the urban area. RCW 36.70A.020.

A list of relevant policies and codes is below, followed by analysis of each component of the scope of work.

### A. Multicounty Planning Policies and Regional Growth Strategy

The MPPs and Regional Growth Strategy create a shared and consistent framework for growth management planning in King, Kitsap, Pierce and Snohomish Counties in accordance with RCW 36.70A.210(7).

Several MPPs are relevant to this study:

**MPP-RGS-4** Accommodate the region’s growth first and foremost in the urban growth area. Ensure that development in rural areas is consistent with the regional vision and the goals of the Regional Open Space Conservation Plan.

**MPP-RGS-12** Avoid increasing development capacity inconsistent with the Regional Growth Strategy in regional geographies not served by high-capacity transit.

**MPP-RGS-13** Plan for commercial, retail, and community services that serve rural residents to locate in neighboring cities and existing activity areas to avoid the conversion of rural land into commercial uses.

**MPP-RGS-14** Manage and reduce rural growth rates over time, consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy, to maintain rural landscapes and lifestyles and protect resource lands and the environment.

**MPP-En-13** Preserve and restore native vegetation and tree canopy, especially where it protects habitat and contributes to overall ecological function.

**MPP-CC-4** Protect and restore natural resources that sequester and store carbon such as forests, farmland, wetlands, estuaries, and urban tree canopy.

**MPP-DP-6** Preserve significant regional historic, visual, and cultural resources, including public views, landmarks, archaeological sites, historic and cultural landscapes, and areas of special character.

<sup>26</sup> [VISION 2050 / Multicounty Planning Policies](#)

<sup>27</sup> [King County Countywide Planning Policies](#)

<sup>28</sup> [2016 Comprehensive Plan, as amended](#)

**MPP-DP-33** Do not allow urban net densities in rural and resource areas.

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

**MPP-DP-44** Work to conserve valuable rural and resource lands through techniques, such as conservation programs, transfer of development rights, and the purchase of development rights. Focus growth within the urban growth area, especially cities, to lessen pressures to convert rural and resource areas to residential uses.

**MPP-DP-45** Avoid growth in rural areas that cannot be sufficiently served by roads, utilities, and services at rural levels of service.

**MPP-Ec-19** Support economic activity and job creation in cities in the rural areas at a size, scale, and type compatible with these communities.

**MPP-Ec-23** Support economic activity in rural and natural resource areas at a size and scale that is compatible with the long-term integrity and productivity of these lands.

**MPP-PS-5** Do not provide urban services in rural areas. Design services for limited access when they are needed to solve isolated health and sanitation problems, so as not to increase the development potential of the surrounding rural area.

**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-28** Locate schools, institutions, and other community facilities serving rural residents in neighboring cities and towns and design these facilities in keeping with the size and scale of the local community, except as provided for by RCW 36.70A.211.

## **B. King County Countywide Planning Policies**

The CPPs create a shared and consistent framework for growth management planning for all jurisdictions in King County in accordance with RCW 36.70A.210. Several CPPs are relevant to this study:

**DP-4** Focus housing growth in the Urban Growth Area within cities, designated regional centers, countywide centers, locally designated local centers, areas of high employment, and other transit supported areas to promote access to opportunity. Focus employment growth within designated regional and countywide manufacturing/industrial centers and within locally designated local centers.

**DP-15** Review the Urban Growth Area at least every ten years. In this review consider monitoring reports and other available data. As a result of this review and based on the criteria established in policies DP-16 through DP-19, King County may propose and then the Growth Management Planning Council may recommend amendments to the Countywide Planning Policies and King County Comprehensive Plan that make changes to the Urban Growth Area boundary.

**DP-16** Allow amendment of the Urban Growth Area only when the following steps have been satisfied:

- a) The proposed amendment is under review by the County as part of an amendment process of the King County Comprehensive Plan;
- b) King County submits the proposal to the Growth Management Planning Council for the purposes of review and recommendation to the King County Council on the proposed amendment to the Urban Growth Area;
- c) The King County Council approves or denies the proposed amendment; and
- d) If approved by the King County Council, the proposed amendment is ratified by the cities following the procedures set forth in policy FW-1.

**DP-17** Allow expansion of the Urban Growth Area only if at least one of the following criteria is met:

- a) A countywide analysis determines that the current Urban Growth Area is insufficient in size and additional land is needed to accommodate the housing and employment growth targets, including institutional and other non-residential uses, and there are no other reasonable measures, such as increasing density or rezoning existing urban land, that would avoid the need to expand the Urban Growth Area; or
- b) A proposed expansion of the Urban Growth Area is accompanied by dedication of permanent open space to the King County Open Space System, where the acreage of the proposed open space:
  - 1) Is at least four times the acreage of the land added to the Urban Growth Area;
  - 2) Is contiguous with the Urban Growth Area with at least a portion of the dedicated open space surrounding the proposed Urban Growth Area expansion; and
  - 3) Preserves high quality habitat, critical areas, or unique features that contribute to the band of permanent open space along the edge of the Urban Growth Area; or
- c) The area is currently a King County park being transferred to a city to be maintained as a park in perpetuity or is park land that has been owned by a city since 1994 and is less than thirty acres in size.

**DP-18** Add land to the Urban Growth Area only if expansion of the Urban Growth Area is warranted based on the criteria in DP-17(a) or DP-17(b), and it meets all of the following criteria:

- a) Is adjacent to the existing Urban Growth Area;
- b) For expansions based on DP-17(a) only, is no larger than necessary to promote compact development that accommodates anticipated growth needs;
- c) Can be efficiently provided with urban services and does not require supportive facilities located in the Rural Area;
- d) Follows topographical features that form natural boundaries, such as rivers and ridge lines and does not extend beyond natural boundaries, such as watersheds, that impede the provision of urban services;
- e) Is not currently designated as Resource Land;
- f) Is sufficiently free of environmental constraints to be able to support urban development without significant adverse environmental impacts, unless the area is designated as an Urban Separator by interlocal agreement between King County and the annexing city; and
- g) Is subject to an agreement between King County and the city or town adjacent to the area that the area will be added to the city's Potential Annexation Area. Upon ratification of the amendment, the Countywide Planning Policies will reflect both the Urban Growth Area change and Potential Annexation Area change.

**DP-30** Evaluate proposals to annex or incorporate urban unincorporated land based on the following criteria, as applicable:

- a) Conformance with Countywide Planning Policies including the Urban Growth Area boundary;
- b) The ability of the annexing or incorporating jurisdiction to efficiently provide urban services at standards equal to or better than the current service providers;
- c) The effect of the annexation or incorporation in avoiding or creating unincorporated islands of development;
- d) The ability of the annexing or incorporating jurisdiction to serve the area in a manner that addresses racial and social equity and promotes access to opportunity; and
- e) Outreach to community, the interest of the community in moving forward with a timely annexation or incorporation of the area.

**DP-46** Provide opportunities for residential and employment growth within Cities in the Rural Area at levels consistent with adopted growth targets. Growth levels should not create pressure for conversion of nearby Rural or Natural Resource lands, nor pressure for extending or expanding urban services, infrastructure, and facilities such as roads or sewer across or into the Rural

Area. Transit service may cross non-urban lands to serve Cities in the Rural Area.

**DP-47** Limit growth in the Rural Area to prevent sprawl and the overburdening of rural services, minimize the need for new rural infrastructure, maintain rural character, and protect open spaces and the natural environment.

**DP-48** Limit residential development in the Rural Area to housing at low densities that are compatible with rural character and comply with the following density guidelines:

- a) One home per 20 acres where a pattern of large lots exists and to buffer Forest Protection Districts and Agricultural Districts;
- b) One home per 10 acres where the predominant lot size is less than 20 acres; or
- c) One home per five acres where the predominant lot size is less than 10 acres. Allow limited clustering within development sites to prevent development on environmentally critical lands or on productive forest or agricultural lands, but not to exceed the density guidelines cited in (a) through (c).

**DP-52** Except as provided in Appendix 5 (March 31, 2012 School Siting Task Force Report), limit new nonresidential uses located in the Rural Area to those that are demonstrated to serve the Rural Area, unless the use is dependent upon a rural location. Such uses shall be of a size, scale, and nature that is consistent with rural character.

**EC-25** Encourage economic activity within Cities in the Rural Area, at an appropriate size, scale, and type compatible with these communities and that does not create adverse impacts to the surrounding Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands.

**PF-1** Provide a full range of urban services in the Urban Growth Area to support the Regional Growth Strategy and adopted growth targets and limit the availability of urban services in the Rural Area consistent with VISION 2050. Avoid locating urban serving facilities in the Rural Area.

**PF-19** Locate schools, institutions, and other community facilities and services that primarily serve urban populations within the Urban Growth Area, where they are accessible to the communities they serve, except as provided in Appendix 5 (March 31, 2012 School Siting Task Force Report). If possible, locate these facilities in places that are well served by transit and pedestrian and bicycle networks.

### **C. King County Comprehensive Plan**

The Comprehensive Plan is the long-range guiding policy document for all land use and development regulations in unincorporated King County. Many Comprehensive Plan policies provide guidance for this study:

- U-185** Through the Four-to-One Program, King County shall actively pursue dedication of open space along the original Urban Growth Area line adopted in the 1994 King County Comprehensive Plan. Through this program, one acre of Rural Area zoned land may be added to the Urban Growth Area in exchange for a dedication to King County of four acres of permanent open space. Land added to the Urban Growth Area for drainage facilities that are designed as mitigation to have a natural looking visual appearance in support of its development, does not require dedication of permanent open space.
  
- U-186** King County shall evaluate Four-to-One proposals for both quality of open space and feasibility of urban development. The highest-quality proposals shall be recommended for adoption as amendments to the Urban Growth Area. Lands preserved as open space shall retain their Rural Area designations and should generally be configured in such a way as to connect with open space on adjacent properties.
  
- U-187** King County shall use the following criteria for evaluating open space in Four-to-One proposals:
  - a. Quality of fish and wildlife habitat areas;
  - b. Connections to regional open space systems;
  - c. Protection of wetlands, stream corridors, ground water and water bodies;
  - d. Unique natural, biological, cultural, historical, or archeological features;
  - e. Size of proposed open space dedication and connection to other open space dedications along the Urban Growth Area line; and
  - f. The land proposed as open space shall remain undeveloped, except for those uses allowed in U-188.
  
- U-188** King County shall preserve the open space acquired through the Four-to-One Program primarily as natural areas, passive recreation sites or resource lands for farming or forestry. King County may allow the following additional uses only if located on a small portion of the open space, provided that these uses are found to be compatible with the site's natural open space values and functions such as those listed in the preceding policy:
  - a. Trails;
  - b. Compensatory mitigation of wetland losses on the urban designated portion of the project, consistent with the King County Comprehensive Plan and the Critical Area Ordinance; and

- c. Active recreation uses not to exceed five percent of the total open space area. Support services and facilities for the active recreation uses may locate within the active recreation area only, and shall not exceed five percent of the active recreation area. An active recreation area shall not be used to satisfy the active recreation requirements for the urban designated portion of the project as required by King County Code Title 21A.

**U-189** Land added to the Urban Growth Area under the Four-to-One Program shall have a minimum density of four dwellings per acre and shall be physically contiguous to the original Urban Growth Area, unless there are limitations due to the presence of critical areas, and shall be able to be served by sewers and other efficient urban services and facilities; provided that such sewer and other urban services and facilities shall be provided directly from the urban area and shall not cross the open space or Rural Area or Natural Resource Lands. Drainage facilities to support the urban development shall be located within the urban portion of the development. In some cases, lands must meet affordable housing requirements under this program. The total area added to the Urban Growth Area as a result of this policy shall not exceed 4,000 acres.

**U-190** King County shall amend the Urban Growth Area to add Rural Area lands to the Urban Growth Area consistent with Policy U-185 during the annual Comprehensive Plan amendment process. Open space dedication shall occur at final formal plat recording. If the applicant decides not to pursue urban development or fails to record the final plat prior to expiration of preliminary plat approval, the urban properties shall be restored to a Rural Area land use designation and associated zoning during the next annual review of the King County Comprehensive Plan.

**RP-203** King County shall continue to support the reduction of sprawl by focusing growth and future development in the Urban Growth Area, consistent with adopted growth targets.

**R-101** King County will continue to preserve and sustain its rural legacy and communities through programs and partnerships that support, preserve, and sustain its historic, cultural, ecological, agricultural, forestry, and mining heritage through collaboration with local and regional preservation and heritage programs, community groups, rural residents and business owners including forest and farm owners, rural communities, towns, and cities, and other interested stakeholders.

**R-201** It is a fundamental objective of the King County Comprehensive Plan to maintain the character of its designated Rural Area. The Growth Management Act specifies the rural element of comprehensive plans include measures that apply to rural development and protect the rural



character of the area (Revised Code of Washington 36.70A.070 (5)). The Growth Management Act defines rural character as it relates to land use and development patterns (Revised Code of Washington 36.70A.030 (15)). This definition can be found in the Glossary of this Plan. Rural development can consist of a variety of uses that are consistent with the preservation of rural character and the requirements of the rural element. In order to implement Growth Management Act, it is necessary to define the development patterns that are considered rural, historical or traditional and do not encourage urban growth or create pressure for urban facilities and service.

Therefore, King County's land use regulations and development standards shall protect and enhance the following attributes associated with rural character and the Rural Area:

- a. The natural environment, particularly as evidenced by the health of wildlife and fisheries (especially salmon and trout), aquifers used for potable water, surface water bodies including Puget Sound and natural drainage systems and their riparian corridors;
- b. Commercial and noncommercial farming, forestry, fisheries, mining, home-occupations and home industries;
- c. Historic resources, historical character and continuity important to local communities, as well as archaeological and cultural sites important to tribes;
- d. Community small-town atmosphere, safety, and locally owned small businesses;
- e. Economically and fiscally healthy Rural Towns and Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers with clearly defined identities compatible with adjacent rural, agricultural, forestry and mining uses;
- f. Regionally significant parks, trails and open space;
- g. A variety of low-density housing choices compatible with adjacent farming, forestry and mining and not needing urban facilities and services;
- h. Traditional rural land uses of a size and scale that blend with historic rural development; and
- i. Rural uses that do not include primarily urban-serving facilities.

**R-205** Uses related to and appropriate for the Rural Area include those relating to agriculture, forestry, mineral extraction, and fisheries, such as the raising of livestock, growing of crops, creating value-added products, and sale of agricultural products; small-scale cottage industries; and recreational and small-scale tourism uses that rely on a rural location.

**R-301** A low growth rate is desirable for the Rural Area, including Rural Towns and Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers, to comply with the State Growth Management Act, continue preventing sprawl and the overburdening of rural services, reduce the need for capital expenditures

for rural roads, maintain rural character, protect the environment and reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions. All possible tools may be used to limit growth in the Rural Area. Appropriate tools include land use designations, development regulations, level of service standards and incentives.

- R-302** Residential development in the Rural Area should occur as follows:
- a. In Rural Towns at a variety of densities and housing types, compatible with maintenance of historic resources and community character; and
  - b. Outside Rural Towns at low densities compatible with traditional rural character and uses, farming, forestry, mining and rural service levels.

**R-303** Rural Area zoned properties should have low residential densities that can be sustained by minimal infrastructure improvements such as septic systems and rural roads, should cause minimal environmental degradation and impacts to significant historic resources, and that will not cumulatively create the future necessity or expectation of urban levels of services.

**R-304** Rural Area zoned residential densities shall be applied in accordance with R-305 – R-309. Individual zone reclassifications are discouraged and should not be allowed in the Rural Area. Property owners seeking individual zone reclassifications should demonstrate compliance with R-305 – R-309.

- R-308** A residential density of one home per five acres shall be applied in the Rural Area where:
- a. The land is physically suitable for development with minimal environmentally sensitive features or critical habitat as determined by legislatively adopted watershed based plans;
  - b. Development can be supported by rural services;
  - c. The land does not meet the criteria in this plan for lower density designations; and
  - d. The predominant lot size is less than 10 acres.

- R-324** Nonresidential uses in the Rural Area shall be limited to those that:
- a. Provide convenient local products and services for nearby residents;
  - b. Require location in a Rural Area;
  - c. Support natural resource-based industries;
  - d. Provide adaptive reuse of significant historic resources; or
  - e. Provide recreational and tourism opportunities that are compatible with the surrounding Rural Area.

These uses shall be sited, sized and landscaped to complement rural character as defined in policy R-101 and R-201, prevent impacts to the environment and function with rural services including on-site wastewater disposal.

- R-334** To maintain traditional rural development patterns and assure continued opportunities for resource activities in the Rural Area, large lot development is preferred in the Rural Area. Clustering of lots is permitted when:
- a. The development provides equal or greater protection of the natural environment, natural resource lands, historic resources or archaeological sites;
  - b. Clusters are limited in size to be compatible with surrounding large lots or nearby agricultural and forestry uses;
  - c. The clustered development is offset with a permanent resource land tract preserved for forestry or agriculture, as designated by the owner at time of subdivision or short subdivision, or a permanent open space tract. Under no circumstances shall the tract be reserved for future development; and
  - d. The development can be served by rural facilities and service levels (such as on-site sewage disposal and fire protection).
- R-501** The Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers designated on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map are small-scale business areas that should provide convenience shopping and services for the surrounding community. No new Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers are needed to serve the Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands. Expansion of the boundaries of the existing Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers shall not be permitted except through a subarea study.
- R-504** King County designates the Rural Towns of Fall City, Snoqualmie Pass, and the Town of Vashon as unincorporated Rural Towns. These historical settlements in unincorporated King County should provide services and a range of housing choices for Rural Area residents. The boundaries of the designated Rural Towns are shown on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map. Adjustments to these boundaries shall only occur through a subarea study, and shall not allow significant increases in development potential or environmental impacts. No new Rural Towns are needed to serve the Rural Area.
- R-512** The creation of new Industrial-zoned lands in the Rural Area shall be limited to those that have long been used for industrial purposes, do not have potential for conversion to residential use due to a historic designation and that may be accessed directly from State Route 169.
- R-513** Rural Public Infrastructure Maintenance Facilities, and agriculture and forestry product processing should be allowed in the Rural Area. Other new industrial uses in the Rural Area shall be permitted only in Rural Towns and in the designated industrial area adjacent to the Rural Neighborhood Commercial Center of Preston.

- H-113** King County should support the development, preservation and rehabilitation of affordable housing that protects residents from exposure to harmful substances and environments, including lead poisoning, reduces the risk of injury, is well-maintained, and is adaptable to all ages and abilities. King County should work on a regional level with jurisdictions to explore tools to ensure healthy housing is provided throughout the region.
- H-121** King County shall support affordable and mixed-income housing development in transit-oriented locations that is compatible with surrounding uses by:
- a. Providing information and a process for accessing potential development sites in transit-oriented locations where King County has ownership or access to potential sites;
  - b. Promoting land use patterns that cohesively connect affordable and mixed-income housing with active transportation choices; and
  - c. Developing public financing techniques that will provide an advantage for projects that will create and/or preserve affordable and mixed-income housing within transit-oriented communities and neighborhoods that promote health, well-being and opportunity, or within a neighborhood plan for revitalization.
- H-208** King County will, to the extent possible, locate health and human services facilities where service delivery is most cost effective and efficient. The equity and social justice opportunities and impacts of possible locations will be taken into account. Locations should be easily accessible to anticipated clientele via various transportation methods including public transit, make the best use of existing facilities and opportunities to co-locate services and be compatible with adjoining uses.
- H-208a** When a health and human services facility is being relocated, King County consideration the impact on current clients, such as accessibility, transportation options and services available at the relocated facility.
- E-112a** The protection of lands where development would pose hazards to health, property, important ecological functions or environmental quality shall be achieved through acquisition, enhancement, incentive programs and appropriate regulations. The following critical areas are particularly susceptible and shall be protected in King County:
- a. Floodways of 100-year floodplains;
  - b. Slopes with a grade of 40% or more or landslide hazards that cannot be mitigated;
  - c. Wetlands and their protective buffers;
  - d. Aquatic areas, including streams, lakes, marine shorelines and their protective buffers;

- e. Channel migration hazard areas;
- f. Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas;
- g. Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas; and
- h. Volcanic hazard areas

**E-473** King County’s overall goal for the protection of wetlands is no net loss of wetland functions and values within each drainage basin. Acquisition, enhancement, regulations, and incentive programs shall be used independently or in combination with one another to protect and enhance wetlands functions and values. Watershed management plans, including Water Resource Inventory Area plans, should be used to coordinate and inform priorities for acquisition, enhancement, regulations, and incentive programs within unincorporated King County to achieve the goal of no net loss of wetland functions and values within each drainage basin.

**E-483** Wetland impacts should be avoided if possible, and minimized in all cases. Where impacts cannot be avoided, they should be mitigated on site if the proposed mitigation is feasible, ecologically appropriate, and likely to continue providing equivalent or better biological functions in perpetuity. Where on-site mitigation is not possible or appropriate, King County may approve off-site mitigation.

**P-109** King County shall complete a regional trails system, linking trail corridors to form a countywide network. King County will continue to primarily own the land necessary for the operation and management of the trail system and pursue public-private funding opportunities for development and maintenance, while ensuring opportunities for access for all King County residents.

**T-235** The King County Regional Trails System is the centerpiece of the nonmotorized system in the Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands. The county’s efforts to enhance the Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands nonmotorized network should include filling in the Regional Trails System’s missing links, coordinating road and trail projects whenever possible, considering access from roadways such as trailhead parking, and enhancing access to transit, especially park and rides and transit centers.

**T-316** King County shall support and encourage the preservation and enhancement of scenic, historic, and recreational resources along the designated Washington Scenic and Recreational Highways located in the county, including I-90 (Mountains to Sound Greenway), US 2 (Stevens Pass Greenway), State Route 410 (Chinook Pass Scenic Byway), and State Route 202 (Cascade Valleys Scenic Byway). The corridor management plans established for these highways should be considered in the development and implementation of King County’s plans, projects and programs.

**F-222** King County and its cities should coordinate planning for health and human service facilities and services. County investments in health and human service facilities should be targeted primarily to the designated Urban Centers and secondarily to other locations in the Urban Growth Area and Rural Towns.

## D. Analysis

The Scope of Work directs the consideration of multiple issues:

1. Whether the study area should be included inside the UGA;
2. Review and recommendation of appropriate zoning for properties within the study area;
3. Whether affordable housing and/or behavioral health support services and/or facilities could locate in this area;
4. Provision of appropriate conservation mitigation for any newly allowed development;
5. Recognition and protection of the forested visual character of the Mountains to Sound National Scenic byway on I-90; and
6. Ensuring potential trail connections for regional trails and adherence to current King County policies.

### Issue 1: Whether the study area should be included inside the UGA

First and foremost, the Scope of Work directs that the study area be examined for possible inclusion within the UGA.

As outlined above, the MPPs and Regional Growth Strategy direct jurisdictions to accommodate growth first and foremost in the urban areas, avoid the conversion of rural lands, protect natural resources, and preserve rural character. In furtherance of these mandates, the CPPs contain narrow criteria for moving the UGA.

CPP DP-17 contains the criteria for moving the UGA. Part a of DP-17 allows the UGA to be moved if a countywide analysis determines that the current countywide UGA is insufficient in size: this is not the case here.<sup>29</sup> Part c allows the UGA to be moved when the area is a King County park being transferred to a city for park purposes; this also does not apply to this the study area. Part b, however, allows the UGA to be moved as part of a qualifying Four-to-One proposal.

At the time the Scope of Work directed this study, the study area did not qualify for consideration under the Four-to-One program because it is not adjacent to the 1994 UGA. From 2022 through 2023, the GMPC studied amendments to countywide UGA expansion policies and the Four-to-One program, including whether to retain the 1994 adjacency requirement. Ultimately, the GMPC made the decision to retain the 1994 UGA as the basis of the program.<sup>30</sup> As of the timing of this report, the study area remains ineligible. See CPPs DP-17, DP-18, and DP-30 and Comprehensive Plan polices U-185 through U-190 above.

<sup>29</sup> [2021 Urban Growth Area Capacity Report](#)

<sup>30</sup> [GMPC Motion 23-4](#)

**Conclusion:** The study area is not appropriate for and does not qualify for inclusion in the UGA.

**Issue 2: Review and recommendation of appropriate zoning for properties within the study area.**

Since the study area does not meet the criteria for inclusion within the UGA, this study now turns to the question of appropriate zoning for the area as part of rural unincorporated King County. Direction is found in the CPPs, in Comprehensive Plan policies, and K.C.C. Title 21A, which provides the purposes for the County's zoning classifications and prescribes allowed uses within each zone.

The Comprehensive Plan directs that no new Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers or Rural Towns are needed to serve the surrounding rural area and nearby natural resource lands (R-501, R-504). The study area does not have a history of industrial use, so Industrial zoning is not supported, the exception being a rural public infrastructure maintenance facility (R-512, R-513). The location and the size of the parcels are not optimal for a working resource land designation (Agriculture, Forest, Mining). The purpose of the neighborhood business zone (NB) is to provide convenient daily retail and personal services for a limited service area; those services are available in the nearby City of Snoqualmie.

Consistent with the GMA, the purpose of the Rural Area zones (RA-2.5, RA-5, RA-10, and RA-20) are for area-wide, long-term, rural character and to minimize land use conflicts with nearby agricultural or forest production districts or mineral extraction sites (K.C.C. 21A.04.060). Rural areas are suitable for low-density residential and other uses that are compatible with rural character and that can be adequately supported by rural service levels, such as parks, trails, recreational vehicle parks, and limited commercial uses when sized and scaled to support the surrounding rural area.

The Rural Area zones include four residential density options.

- **RA-2.5** (one lot per 2.5 acres) is for areas where the predominant lot pattern is below five acres in size on lots established prior to the 1994 Comprehensive Plan.
- **RA-5** (one home per five acres) is for areas where the predominant lot pattern is greater than five acres but is less than 10 acres, and generally unconstrained with environmentally critical areas.
- **RA-10** (one home per 10 acres) is for areas where the predominant lot pattern is greater than 10 acres but less than 20 acres, and areas within a quarter mile of either an Agricultural or Forest Production District.
- **RA-20** (one home per 20 acres) is for areas designated as Rural Forest Focus Areas by the Comprehensive Plan.

Given the purposes of the Rural Area zones and the predominant lot pattern of the study area and vicinity discussed previously, RA-5 is the most appropriate zoning classification for the study area. The zoning code generally permits residential uses within the RA-5 zone when developed at densities consistent with the zoning classification, along with uses that are compatible with the rural character of the area, preserve and protect the critical areas in the study area, and would not require extension of urban-level services and utilities into the area.



The following non-residential uses are permitted as standalone uses in the Rural Area zone of the study area, subject to the development conditions list in the applicable permitted uses table of K.C.C. Chapter 21A.08.

- Parks
- Trails
- Campgrounds
- Recreational camp
- Arboretum
- Animal specialty services
- Interim recycling facility
- Utility facility
- Commuter parking lot
- Log storage
- Off-street required parking lot
- Retail nursery, garden center, and farm supply store
- Forest product sales
- Farmers market
- Materials processing facility
- Furniture and fixtures manufacturing
- Growing and harvesting crops
- Raising livestock and small animals
- Agricultural activities
- Agricultural support services
- Growing and harvesting forest products
- Forest research
- Hatchery/fish preserve
- Aquaculture
- Wildlife shelters
- Zoo animal breeding facility

A number of additional uses are permitted in the RA-5 zone when associated with a residential use on the property or as an accessory use, although they require a conditional use permit. Even more non-residential uses are allowed in the RA-5 zone with either a conditional use permit or a special use permit. Conditional use permits and special use permits require public notification and additional evaluation of compatibility with the rural area and consistency with King County policies.

**Conclusion:** The study area should retain its RA-5 zoning.

**Issue 3: Whether affordable housing and/or behavioral health support services and/or facilities could locate in this area.**

Since the study area does not meet the criteria and is not appropriate for inclusion in the UGA, development of affordable housing or behavioral health facilities were evaluated under the current and recommended zoning. While housing that is affordable for those making less than the median income is permitted in the study area, the lower densities, environmental site constraints, and limited access to transit and other services make these uses not well suited for the study area.

CPP PF-19 directs the location of institutions and other community facilities and services, which would include behavioral health facilities, to urban growth areas if they serve urban populations. The location of behavioral health support services and/or facilities in the study area is not permitted outright and would face many of the same site-development challenges as affordable housing including lack of public utilities and frequent transit service.

Some options allowed by the zoning include a Community Residential Facility I (up to 10 residents), a Social Services use, or an Office/Outpatient Clinic. Each of these uses could be proposed through a conditional use permit process. It is not possible to currently evaluate the merits of a potential development of this type without specific information related to the proposal.

**Conclusion:** While not optimal in this location, it is possible that some smaller scale behavioral health support services and/or facilities could locate in the study area, at lower densities and/or through the conditional use permit process.

**Issue 4: Provision of appropriate conservation mitigation for any newly allowed development.**

It is assumed that this element of the required analysis for this study is connected to the potential for a Four-to-One proposal within the study area. Four-to-One projects are required to identify four acres of permanently conserved land for every one acre of new urban development. However, this site is not eligible for the Four-to-One program. It would not otherwise be required that new development in this area provide such mitigations.

**Conclusion:** No special conservation mitigations are recommended for newly allowed development within the study area other than would occur under the current and recommended RA-5 zoning.

**Issue 5: Recognition and protection of the forested visual character of the Mountains to Sound National Scenic byway on I-90.**

The study area is in the Mountains to Sound Greenway, a National Scenic Byway and a National Heritage Area along I-90 that has been the focus of a major regional effort to preserve the natural scenic character of the corridor. Comprehensive Plan policy T-316 states that “King County shall support and encourage the preservation and enhancement of scenic, historic, and recreational resources along the designated Washington Scenic and Recreational Highways located in the county, including I-90 (Mountains to Sound Greenway)” and others.

The current and recommended zoning supports low-density residential and rural dependent uses. Any intensification of uses in this area beyond what is contemplated by the Rural Area land use designation has the potential to negatively impact the viewshed from the highway looking north. Protection of the northwest portion of the study area is an important factor in protecting the forested visual character of the Mountains to Sound National Scenic Byway on I-90.

**Conclusion:** An intensification of development in the study area could potentially negatively impact the Mountains to Sound viewshed.

**Issue 6: Ensuring potential trail connections for regional trails and adherence to current King County policies.**

King County’s long-term program for expanding and enhancing its Regional Trails network is found in the King County Regional Trails Needs Report. Regional trails planning is also informed by ongoing feasibility studies and related open space initiatives. Coordination with cities and regional partners in planning for the Regional Trails Network is essential but generally happens separately from long range comprehensive planning.

The study area is at the potential crossroads of regional trails and within the viewshed of the Mountains to Sound Greenway. Just to the north of the study area is the Snoqualmie Ridge Trail which connects to other regional trails such as the Whitaker Trail, the Centennial Trail, making this an important area for trail connections. The study area is also adjacent to growing mountain

biking networks on Tiger Mountain and Rattlesnake Ridge. The future link of the Mountains to Sound Trail is shown in renderings on WSDOT's I-90/SR 18 Interchange Improvements project website.<sup>31</sup> WSDOT informed County staff that the trail in their renderings is based on conversations with both the Mountains to Sound Greenway and DNR.

WSDOT further explained that the inclusion of bike and pedestrian facilities on the new Interchange anticipates the possibility that these proposed trails advance beyond the concept stage. DNR explained that keeping the possibility for a regional trail through these properties is an important consideration, that north-south trail connections (SR-18) need to be considered in addition to east-west connections (I-90), and that these areas should have green space conserved for wildlife connectivity. The King County Regional Trails group suggests an 18-foot corridor dedicated to this future regional trail to meet County standards.

**Conclusion:** Ensuring connections to and between regional trails is part of the County's long range trail planning and implementation. King County will continue to work with cities, regional partners, and the community to provide trail linkages within and around the study area. Retaining the current land use designation and zoning classification would provide the best chance to preserve opportunities for future trail connections.

## V. Equity and Social Justice Analysis

Equity and/or social justice issues related to potential future development in the study area are not anticipated because this area has a low 2019 Equity Score of 1.67, signifying this area is more wealthy and less diverse.<sup>32</sup> This score indicates a low presence of priority populations identified in King County Code Chapter 2.10 (people of color, low-income communities, and people with limited English proficiency).<sup>33</sup> There are currently no dwellings in the study area, so there is no risk of displacement.

## VI. Engagement

Engagement throughout the development of this study included multiple communications between King County planning staff and the City of Snoqualmie, the Snoqualmie Tribe, Mountains to Sound Greenway, King County Councilmembers and staff, WSDOT, DNR, Snoqualmie Valley Hospital, KCSARA, land preservation and community advocates, landowners, tenants, and project proponents. These discussions occurred in person, as well as virtually and via email and phone calls, and helped document the parties' varied interests.

There were also discussions at the GMPC, as that body considered changes to countywide UGA expansion policies and the Four-to-One program over a two-year period. Key communications to that body included public comment and letters from the Cities of Snoqualmie and North Bend, WSDOT, Futurewise, Transportation Choices Coalition, Sierra Club, representatives from rural community organizations, and individual county residents.

Much of the above communications, including comment letters, emails, and public testimony, are part of the public record.

<sup>31</sup> [I-90 – SR 18 Interchange Improvements | WSDOT \(wa.gov\)](#)

<sup>32</sup> [Census Viewer \(arcgis.com\)](#) Scores range 1 to 5, with higher scores representing a more diverse, less wealthy population.

<sup>33</sup> [Ordinance 16948](#)

## VII. Conclusion and Recommendation

### A. Conclusion

Based on the above analysis, the potential level of development in the study area should remain low intensity to be consistent with the surrounding rural area, to not create new impacts and growth pressure by conversion to urban areas or more intensive rural uses, and to not create new policy or precedent that would incentivize rural to urban conversions in other parts of the county. This furthers the goals of the GMA and Regional Growth Strategy to accommodate growth first and foremost in the urban areas, avoid the conversion of rural lands, protect natural resources, and preserve rural character.

The study area is located in the rural area, adjacent to the UGA and the incorporated limits of the City of Snoqualmie but ineligible to be added to the UGA by long-standing policy. It has been reviewed several times over two decades for inclusion in the UGA, redesignation, and reclassification. Each time, the recommendation has been to maintain the UGA boundary and current land use designation and zoning classification of the area. This has been the conclusion at both the local level through the Comprehensive Plan and, more recently, at the countywide level through GMPC action on the CPPs.

The study area is largely vacant, with the exception of the adaptive reuse of a former recreational vehicle campground as a base of operations for KCSARA. This use operates under current zoning and serves activities that occur largely in the rural and natural resource lands accessed to the east of the study area. This use fits the rural setting because it is low intensity and serves activities occurring in the rural and natural resource lands of the county.

The current RA-5 zoning allows for low-density residential uses that could be clustered as necessary to preserve and protect the numerous streams and wetlands that exist in the area and still remain consistent with rural area character. Additional land uses may be considered as permitted, conditional, and special uses in accordance with K.C.C. development regulations, as discussed above. Affordable housing is unlikely to be located in the study area. Regardless of the potential uses that may occur in the study area, special attention should be paid to the viewshed of the area, critical areas, as well as adequate spaces for potential use as a regional trail.

The zoning, similar to elsewhere in the study area, supports low-density residential and rural dependent uses. Any intensification of uses in this area beyond what is contemplated by the Rural Area land use designation has the potential to negatively impact the planned function of the imminent improvements to the Snoqualmie Interchange, as well as impact the viewshed from the highway looking north.

Protection of the northwest portion of the study area is an important factor in protecting the forested visual character of the Mountains to Sound National Scenic Byway on I-90. The northeast corner of the study area, abutting the UGA, contains numerous critical areas, and provides a forested gateway into the City of Snoqualmie. This area still provides a significant visual and sound buffer for the residential neighborhoods inside the City.

**B. Recommendation**

This study recommends that the UGA be maintained in its current location (consistent with current countywide policy) and that the study area keep its Rural Area land use designation and RA-5 zoning classification.