

1 Adopted: December 17, 2025
2 Effective: December 28, 2025

3 SNOHOMISH COUNTY COUNCIL
4 Snohomish County, Washington

5
6 AMENDED ORDINANCE NO. 25-051
7

8 RELATING TO GROWTH MANAGEMENT; AMENDING THE SNOHOMISH COUNTY OFFICIAL
9 ZONING MAP TO MORE FULLY IMPLEMENT THE URBAN MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
10 AND URBAN HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL DESIGNATIONS ON THE SNOHOMISH COUNTY
11 GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FUTURE LAND USE MAP

12
13 WHEREAS, on December 4, 2024, the Snohomish County Council ("County Council") adopted the
14 Snohomish County Growth Management Act Comprehensive Plan (GMACP) including the Future Land
15 Use (FLU) Map through Amended Ordinance No. 24-033 pursuant to RCW 36.70A.130; and

16
17 WHEREAS, counties and cities that are required to plan under the Growth Management Act
18 (GMA), chapter 36.70A RCW, must ensure their comprehensive plans and zoning are consistent; and

19
20 WHEREAS, the Snohomish County Official Zoning Map ("zoning map") is generally consistent
21 with the FLU Map; and

22
23 WHEREAS, the Urban Medium Density Residential (UMDR) designation on the FLU Map allows
24 for a range of implementing zones, with the highest density implementing zone being Low Density
25 Multiple Residential (LDMR); and

26
27 WHEREAS, the Urban High Density Residential (UHDR) designation on the FLU Map allows for a
28 range of implementing zones, with the highest density implementing zone being Multiple Residential
29 (MR); and

30
31 WHEREAS, if those zones are not in place in those FLU designations, developers are allowed to
32 and normally will apply for site-specific quasi-judicial rezone as part of the permitting process in
33 advance of, or concurrent with, applications for new housing development in order to develop at the
34 planned density, an extra and redundant step in the permitting process that increases time and costs for
35 new housing construction that would not be necessary if those zones were in place; and

36
37 WHEREAS, state, regional, countywide, and County laws and policies support streamlining the
38 permitting process to be more efficient and predictable and minimize additional costs in order to
39 address housing supply and affordability; and

40
41 WHEREAS, on April 22, 2025, the Snohomish County Planning Commission ("Planning
42 Commission") was briefed by Snohomish County Planning and Development Services (PDS) staff about
43 the zoning map amendments contained in the original Ordinance No. 25-051; and

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URBAN MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL AND URBAN HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL DESIGNATIONS ON THE SNOHOMISH COUNTY GROWTH
MANAGEMENT ACT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FUTURE LAND USE MAP
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1 WHEREAS, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on May 27, 2025, to receive public
2 testimony concerning those zoning map amendments; and
3

4 WHEREAS, the notice of the Planning Commission public hearing was mailed to 35,526
5 addresses, including those taxpayers of record and site addresses potentially affected by the zoning map
6 amendments and those within 500 feet of a zoning map amendment, and published in the Everett
7 Herald; and
8

9 WHEREAS, at the conclusion of the Planning Commission's public hearing, the Planning
10 Commission deliberated on the zoning map amendments and voted to recommend approval of the
11 zoning map amendments, as shown in its recommendation letter dated July 1, 2025; and
12

13 WHEREAS, prior to presentation of the original Ordinance No. 25-051 being presented to the
14 County Council, two properties proposed to be rezoned to LDMR under this proposal were rezoned to
15 LDMR as site-specific rezone and Exhibit A to this Substitute Ordinance No. 25-051 reflects that; and
16

17 WHEREAS, on October 1, 2025, the County Council held a public hearing after proper notice, and
18 considered public comment and the entire record related to the zoning map amendments contained in
19 the original Ordinance No. 25-051 and deliberated on the zoning map amendments contained therein;
20 and
21

22 WHEREAS, after much discussion and consideration, the County Council sent the original
23 Ordinance No. 25-051 back to the Planning and Community Development Committee wherein it was
24 reintroduced and discussed on October 7, 2025; and
25

26 WHEREAS, Council requested that a substitute ordinance be drafted to exclude the area known
27 as Esperance from the areawide rezone and then be sent back to Council for consideration; and
28

29 WHEREAS, this proposed Substitute Ordinance No. 25-051 excludes Esperance from the
30 areawide rezone as proposed in the original Ordinance No. 25-051; and
31

32 WHEREAS, Councilmembers also requested that a new ordinance be drafted specific to rezone
33 the Esperance area only; and
34

35 WHEREAS, at the October 1, 2025, County Council public hearing and the October 7, 2025,
36 Planning and Community Development Committee meeting, Councilmembers expressed a desire for the
37 Esperance area to be annexed into the City of Edmonds and asked County Planning and Development
38 Services staff to work with the City of Edmonds in coordination; and
39

40 WHEREAS, on December 17, 2025, the County Council held a public hearing after proper
41 notice, and considered public comment and the entire record related to the zoning map amendments
42 contained in this Substitute Ordinance No. 25-051; and
43

AMENDED ORDINANCE NO. 25-051

RELATING TO GROWTH MANAGEMENT; AMENDING THE SNOHOMISH COUNTY OFFICIAL ZONING MAP TO MORE FULLY IMPLEMENT THE
URBAN MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL AND URBAN HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL DESIGNATIONS ON THE SNOHOMISH COUNTY GROWTH
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1 WHEREAS, following the public hearing, the County Council deliberated on the zoning map
2 amendments contained herein;

3
4 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED:

5
6 Section 1. The County Council adopts the following findings in support of this ordinance:

7
8 A. The foregoing recitals are adopted as findings as if set forth in full herein.

9
10 B. This ordinance amends the Snohomish County Official Zoning Map to adopt LDMR and MR zones to
11 more fully implement the UMDR and UHDR designations respectively on the adopted GMACP FLU
12 Map.

13
14 C. This ordinance maintains and improves consistency with the Snohomish County GMACP as required
15 under RCW 36.70A.040.

16
17 D. In developing the zoning map amendments in this ordinance, the County considered the Growth
18 Management Act (GMA) goals within RCW 36.70A.020. In particular, the proposed amendments are
19 consistent with and promote:

20
21 GMA Goal 1: "Urban growth. Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public
22 facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner."

23
24 GMA Goal 2: "Reduce sprawl. Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into
25 sprawling, low-density development."

26
27 GMA Goal 7: "Permits. Applications for both state and local government permits should be
28 processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability."

29
30 The zoning map amendments in this ordinance streamline the permitting process by removing a
31 step in the development process to apply for a quasi-judicial rezone prior to new development, as is
32 often necessary in areas where the FLU map has not been fully implemented in the zoning. In
33 addition, the zoning map amendments support planned densities within the UGA where services
34 and facilities exist currently to accommodate higher levels of growth. The zoning map amendments
35 also support infill development to concentrate growth within the UGA, reducing urban sprawl
36 outside of the UGA.

37
38 E. In developing the zoning map amendments in this ordinance, the County considered the following
39 Multicounty Planning Policies (MPPs):

40
41 MPP-RGS-6: "Encourage efficient use of urban land by optimizing the development potential of
42 existing urban lands and increasing density in the urban growth area in locations consistent with
43 the Regional Growth Strategy."

1 MPP-H-10: "Encourage jurisdictions to review and streamline development standards and
2 regulations to advance their public benefit, provide flexibility, and minimize additional costs to
3 housing."

4
5 The zoning map amendments in this ordinance streamline the permitting process by removing a
6 step in the development process to apply for a quasi-judicial rezone prior to new development, as is
7 often necessary in areas where the FLU map has not been fully implemented in the zoning. In
8 addition, the zoning map amendments in this ordinance support planned housing densities within
9 the UGA and opportunity for infill development, ensuring land is used efficiently.

10
11 F. The map amendments in this ordinance support the Snohomish County Countywide Planning
12 Policies (CPPs):

13
14 HO-4: "The county and cities should implement policies that allow for the development of
15 moderate density housing to help meet future housing needs, diversify the housing stock, and
16 provide more affordable home ownership and rental opportunities. This approach should
17 include code updates to ensure that zoning designations and allowed densities, housing
18 capacity, and other restrictions do not preclude development of moderate density housing."

19
20 The zoning map amendments in this ordinance are consistent with the CPPs as they support the
21 GMACP FLU Map designation of UMDR that plans for moderate densities in urban zones to support
22 development of more housing, and greater variety of housing, to accommodate future housing
23 needs and availability of more affordable home ownership and rental opportunities.

24
25 G. The zoning map amendments in this ordinance more fully implement and ensure consistency with
26 the following policies from the Land Use and Housing Elements of the GMACP:

27
28 "Urban Medium Density Residential (UMDR). This designation allows a variety of housing types,
29 including detached homes on small lots, townhouses, and apartments in medium density
30 developments. Implementing zones: MHP, LDMR, PRD-LDMR, Townhouse, R-7,200, PRD-7,200
31 and WFB."

32
33 "Urban High Density Residential (UHDR). This designation allows high density residential land
34 uses such as townhouses and apartments generally near other high intensity land uses.
35 Implementing zones: MHP, MR, PRD-MR, LDMR, and PRD-LDMR."

36
37 HO 3.A.2: "Development standards and building permit requirements shall be reviewed on a
38 continual basis to ensure clarity and consistency while providing for a timely, fair, and
39 predictable application processing outcome."

40
41 The zoning map amendments in this ordinance more fully implement the UMDR and UHDR FLU
42 designations adopted on the GMACP FLU Map. The zoning map amendments in this ordinance
43 streamline the permitting process by removing a step in the development process to apply for a

1 quasi-judicial rezone prior to new development, as is often necessary in areas where the FLU map
2 has not been fully implemented in the zoning.

3

4 H. Procedural requirements.

5

6 1. The zoning map amendments in this ordinance are a Type 3 legislative action under SCC
7 30.73.010 and 30.73.020.

8

9 2. As required by RCW 30.70A.106(1), a notice of intent to adopt the proposed zoning
10 amendments was transmitted to the Washington State Department of Commerce for
11 distribution to state agencies on May 5, 2025.

12

13 3. State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), chapter 43.21C RCW, requirements with respect to this
14 non-project action were satisfied through analysis in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
15 for the Snohomish County 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update and an addendum to that EIS
16 issued to that effect on May 5, 2025.

17

18 4. The public participation process for the proposed zoning amendments has complied with all
19 applicable requirements of the GMA and SCC.

20

21 5. As required by RCW 36.70A.370, the Washington State Attorney General last issued an advisory
22 memorandum in October 2024 titled “Advisory Memorandum and Recommended Process for
23 Evaluating Proposed Regulatory or Administrative Actions to Avoid Unconstitutional Takings of
24 Private Property” to help local governments avoid unconstitutional takings of private property.
25 The process outlined in the State Attorney General’s 2024 advisory memorandum was used by
26 the County in objectively evaluating the regulatory changes in this proposal.

27

28 I. The zoning map amendments in this ordinance are consistent with the record:

29

30 1. This ordinance amends the Snohomish County Official Zoning Map to adopt LDMR and MR
31 zones over approximately 3,049 acres within the Southwest County Urban Growth Area to more
32 fully implement the UMDR and UHDR designations respectively on the adopted GMACP FLU
33 Map.

34

35 2. The zoning map amendments are consistent with the record as set forth in the PDS Staff Report
36 dated April 4, 2025.

37

38 Section 2. The County Council makes the following conclusions:

39

40 A. The amendments proposed by this ordinance are consistent with all applicable federal, state, and
41 local laws and regulations.

- 1 B. The amendments proposed by this ordinance are consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies
- 2 of the MPPs, CPPs, and the Snohomish County GMACP.
- 3
- 4 C. The County has complied with all SEPA requirements in respect to this non-project action.
- 5
- 6 D. The public participation process used in the adoption of this ordinance complies with all applicable
- 7 requirements of the GMA and title 30 SCC.
- 8
- 9 E. The amendments proposed by this ordinance do not result in an unconstitutional taking of private
- 10 property for a public purpose.

12 Section 3. The County Council bases its findings and conclusions on the entire record of the
13 County Council, including all testimony and exhibits. Any finding, which should be deemed a conclusion,
14 and any conclusion which should be deemed a finding, is hereby adopted as such.

16 Section 4. The Snohomish County Official Zoning Map maintained pursuant to SCC 30.21.030
17 shall be revised to reflect the zoning map amendments adopted by the County Council as indicated in
18 Exhibit A to this ordinance, which is attached hereto and incorporated by reference into this ordinance.

20 Section 5. Severability and Savings. If any section, sentence, clause or phrase of this ordinance
21 shall be held to be invalid by the Growth Management Hearings Board (Board), or unconstitutional by a
22 court of competent jurisdiction, such invalidity or unconstitutionality shall not affect the validity or
23 constitutionality of any other section, sentence, clause or phrase of this ordinance. Provided, however,
24 that if any section, sentence, clause or phrase of this ordinance is held to be invalid by the Board or
25 court of competent jurisdiction, then the section, sentence, clause or phrase in effect prior to the
26 effective date of this ordinance shall be in full force and effect for that individual section, sentence,
27 clause or phrase as if this ordinance had never been adopted.

29 PASSED this 17th day of December 2025.

SNOHOMISH COUNTY COUNCIL
Snohomish County, Washington

37 ATTEST:

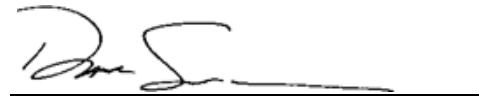
Lise Hickey
Act. Clerk of the Council

Asst. Clerk of the Council

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4
5 (X) APPROVED
6 () EMERGENCY
7 () VETOED

8
9
10 DATE: December 18, 2025
11

12 ATTEST:
13
14 Melissa Geraghty
15
16 Approved as to form only:
17
18 Alethea Hart, 11/7/2025
19 Deputy Prosecuting Attorney
20
21
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23
24
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County Executive

EXHIBIT A

