



Snohomish County

Planning and Development Services

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Snohomish County Planning Commission **Dave Somers**
County Executive

FROM: Frank Slusser, PDS

SUBJECT: Area-wide Rezones to More Fully Implement Urban Medium and High Density
Residential Designations in the Adopted 2024 Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map

DATE: April 4, 2025

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this staff report is to provide information for a non-project proposal to amend the official zoning map for Snohomish County to rezone approximately 3,499 acres within the Southwest Urban Growth Area (UGA) to Low Density Multiple Residential (LDMR) and Multiple Residential (MR) zoning. The aim of this code project is to more fully implement and provide consistency with the Urban Medium Density Residential (UMDR) and Urban High Density Residential (UHDR) designations on the future land use (FLU) map in the recently adopted 2024 Snohomish County Growth Management Act Comprehensive Plan ("2024 Comprehensive Plan"). This project will streamline permitting processes by eliminating the need for site-specific rezone approvals for individual housing development projects in order to build to the planned densities in some areas where different zoning is still in place.

PROPOSAL BACKGROUND

Snohomish County adopted the 2024 Comprehensive Plan in December 2024. The Plan included adoption of a revised FLU map planning for sufficient development capacity to accommodate growth projections to 2044 consistent with the periodic review requirements of Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 36.70A.130 of the Growth Management Act (GMA). This included a thorough review of areas inside the pre-existing UGA that were appropriate for re-designation to FLU designations of UMDR or UHDR. The review resulted in nearly 2,300 acres of additional land within the pre-existing UGA redesignated to the UMDR FLU designation and a small additional amount of land redesignated to UHDR.

The adopted FLU map also includes large areas that were already designated UMDR and UHDR prior to the 2024 update and continue to provide capacity for future development.

The FLU map designations provide general guidance for the more specific zoning that should be applied within those areas. Implementing zones are based on the FLU Map designation descriptions found in the Land Use Element, which provide a limited range of options for zones to implement each FLU designation:

Urban Medium Density Residential (UMDR).

This designation allows a variety of housing types, including detached homes on small lots, townhouses, and apartments in medium density developments. Implementing zones: MHP, LDMR, PRD-LDMR, Townhouse, R-7,200, PRD-7,200 and WFB.

Urban High Density Residential (UHDR).

This designation allows high density residential land uses such as townhouses and apartments generally near other high intensity land uses. Implementing zones: MHP, MR, PRD-MR, LDMR, and PRD-LDMR.

For the UMDR FLU designation, the highest density zoning allowed is LDMR, and for UHDR, the highest density zoning allowed is MR. If those zones are not already in place in areas with those FLU designations, a developer is allowed to and normally will apply for a rezone to those zoning designations prior to new development. That means there is an extra step in the permitting process for new housing development proposals that only affects locations that were not rezoned to LDMR or MR at the time that the UMDR or UHDR FLU designation was adopted. The comprehensive plan is based on capacity estimates that assume that development in the UMDR and UHDR FLU designations will normally build at LDMR or MR zoning respectively. This rezoning project will increase the efficiency of permitting by removing that previously necessary step that adds time for both staff and the public without benefit.

Development of Proposal

The Executive directed staff to develop a proposal to fully implement the UMDR and UHDR designations in the adopted 2024 Comprehensive Plan to the highest density zoning allowed.

This proposal focused on the same area that was the subject of the infill review for the 2024 update. As described in the September 11, 2023, memorandum to the Planning Commission, the “2024 Update Future Land Use, Zoning, and Municipal Urban Growth Area Map Alternatives,” review focused on the portions of the unincorporated UGA that are part of the High Capacity Transit (HCT) Communities regional geography in the Puget Sound Regional Council VISION 2050. The review excluded some areas that are unsewerable or with topography unsuitable for UMDR development and areas beneath airport runway approaches.

For this proposal, the area known as the Lake Stickney Gap area, which is not part of the HCT Communities regional geography but is within the newly adopted Urban Core Subarea and served by high-capacity transit, was also included in the review. In addition, this proposal does affect the Edmonds Municipal Urban Growth Area, a part of the HCT Communities regional geography which was not affected by re-designations resulting from the infill review for the 2024 Comprehensive Plan because the area was already all designated with UMDR or higher density FLU designations.

Within the review area identified above, those areas designated UMDR but not zoned LDMR are proposed to be rezoned to LDMR. Similarly, areas designated UHDR but not zoned MR are proposed to be rezoned to MR. In addition, some areas that are designated Public/Institutional Use (P/IU) and adjacent to areas proposed for rezone are also included in the areas to be rezoned to either LDMR or MR to remain consistent if adjacent properties are being rezoned. Per the description of the P/IU FLU designation in the Land Use Element, “Implementing zoning should be consistent with surrounding zones.” There were some exceptions to these general rules:

- No areas zoned Mobile Home Park (MHP) are proposed to be rezoned. This zone has been applied to protect specific existing mobile/manufactured home parks from redevelopment.

- No areas zoned Waterfront Beach (WFB) are proposed to be rezoned. This zone exists around specific waterbodies, including lakes in urban areas.
- One area zoned Rural Conservation, a legacy zone that is no longer an implementing zone for any FLU designation, is not proposed to be rezoned despite being in an area designated UMDR. Consideration of amendments to the Rural Conservation zone could be a future project.
- Areas zoned Townhouse within the UMDR designation are not proposed to be rezoned, but those within the UHDR designation are proposed to be rezoned to MR. The Townhouse zone exists on only a small number of properties and was intended to provide for medium density development.

PROPOSED AREA-WIDE REZONES

The proposal is to amend the official zoning map for Snohomish County to rezone approximately 3,499 acres within the Southwest UGA to Low Density Multiple Residential (LDMR) and Multiple Residential (MR) zoning.

Table 1. Acreage of Proposed Rezones

| Current Zoning | Proposed Zoning | Acres |
|-------------------|-----------------|----------|
| PRD SA-1 | LDMR | 10.62 |
| PRD-7,200 | LDMR | 172.54 |
| PRD-7,200(Mobile) | LDMR | 10.03 |
| PRD-8,400 | LDMR | 18.21 |
| PRD-9,600 | LDMR | 38.27 |
| R-12,500 | LDMR | 1.16 |
| R-7,200 | LDMR | 2,169.19 |
| R-7,200(PRD) | LDMR | 92.59 |
| R-8,400 | LDMR | 679.76 |
| R-9,600 | LDMR | 10.24 |
| LDMR | MR | 51.79 |
| PRD-7,200 | MR | 3.66 |
| PRD-9,600 | MR | 14.45 |
| PRD-LDMR | MR | 26.96 |
| R-7,200 | MR | 107.22 |
| R-8,400 | MR | 85.22 |
| Townhouse | MR | 6.90 |

The proposed amendments to the official zoning map are shown in Attachment B to this staff report, “2025 Area-wide Rezones.”

ANALYSIS

The following analysis provides a summary of this proposal’s compliance with state law, as well as regional, countywide, and county Comprehensive Plan policies.

Compliance with State Law

The GMA planning goals adopted in RCW 36.70A.020 guide the development and adoption of comprehensive plans and development regulations, including zoning. The goals are not priority-listed. In particular, the GMA goals guide the policies and FLU map in the Snohomish County 2024 Comprehensive Plan and require consistency between the 2024 Comprehensive Plan and implementing development regulations, including zoning. Table 2 identifies the reasonably related GMA planning goals listed in RCW 36.70A.020 and describes how the proposed area-wide rezones are consistent with and advance those goals.

Table 2. Compliance with GMA Planning Goals

| GMA Planning Goal | Finding |
|--|--|
| GMA Goal 1 Urban growth. Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner. | The proposed amendments support planned densities within the UGA where services and facilities exist currently to accommodate higher levels of growth. |
| GMA Goal 2 Reduce sprawl. Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development. | The proposed amendments support infill development to concentrate growth within the UGA, reducing urban sprawl outside of the UGA. |
| GMA Goal 7 Permits. Applications for both state and local government permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability. | The proposed amendments streamline the permitting process by removing a step in the development process to apply for a rezone prior to new development, as is often necessary in areas where the FLU map has not been fully implemented in the zoning. |

Compliance with the Multi-County Planning Policies

Multi-County Planning Policies (MPPs) within VISION 2050 “provide for coordination and consistency among the metropolitan counties sharing common borders and related regional issues as required by RCW 36.70A.100, and, in order to ensure consistency, the directive policies of the MPPs need to have a binding effect.” (Summit-Waller Community Association, et al, v Pierce County). Table 3 identifies the reasonably related MPPs within VISION 2050 and describes how the proposed area-wide rezones are consistent with and advance those goals.

Table 3. Compliance with MPPs

| MPP | Finding |
|---|--|
| MPP-RGS-6. Encourage efficient use of urban land by optimizing the development potential of existing urban lands and increasing density in the urban growth area in locations consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy. | The proposed amendments support planned housing densities within the UGA and opportunity for infill development. This ensures land is used efficiently. |
| MPP-H-10. Encourage jurisdictions to review and streamline development standards and regulations to advance their public benefit, provide flexibility, and minimize additional costs to housing. | The proposed amendments streamline the permitting process by removing a step in the development process to apply for a rezone prior to new development, as is often necessary in areas where the FLU map has not been fully implemented in the zoning. |

Compliance with the Countywide Planning Policies

Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) establish a countywide framework for developing and adopting county, city, and town comprehensive plans. The role of the CPPs is to coordinate comprehensive plans of jurisdictions in the same county regarding regional issues and issues affecting common borders (RCW 36.70A.100). Table 4 identifies the reasonably related CPPs and describes how the proposed area-wide rezones are consistent with and advance those goals.

Table 4. Compliance with CPPs

| CPP | Finding |
|---|---|
| HO-4. The county and cities should implement policies that allow for the development of moderate density housing to help meet future housing needs, diversify the housing stock, and provide more affordable home ownership and rental opportunities. This approach should include code updates to ensure that zoning designations and allowed densities, housing capacity, and other restrictions do not preclude development of moderate density housing. | The proposed amendments support the 2024 Comprehensive Plan UMDR FLU designations that plan for moderate densities in urban zones to support development of more housing, and greater variety of housing, to accommodate future housing needs and availability of affordable home ownership and rental opportunities. |

Compliance with the Snohomish County 2024 Comprehensive Plan

The proposed area-wide rezones will better achieve, comply with, and implement the policies identified in Table 5 contained in the 2024 Comprehensive Plan.

Table 5. Compliance with the Comprehensive Plan

| 2024 Comprehensive Plan Policy | Finding |
|--|--|
| <i>Urban Medium Density Residential (UMDR).</i> This designation allows a variety of housing types, including detached homes on small lots, townhouses, and apartments in medium density developments. Implementing zones: MHP, LDMR, PRD-LDMR, Townhouse, R-7,200, PRD-7,200 and WFB. <i>Urban High Density Residential (UHDR).</i> This designation allows high density residential land uses such as townhouses and apartments generally near other high intensity land uses. Implementing zones: MHP, MR, PRD-MR, LDMR, and PRD-LDMR. | The proposed amendments more fully implement the UMDR and UHDR FLU designations adopted in the 2024 Comprehensive Plan. |
| HO 3.A.2. Development standards and building permit requirements shall be reviewed on a continual basis to ensure clarity and consistency | The proposed amendments streamline the permitting process by removing a step in the development process to apply for a rezone prior to new development, as is often necessary in areas |

| 2024 Comprehensive Plan Policy | Finding |
|---|---|
| while providing for a timely, fair, and predictable application processing outcome. | where the FLU map has not been fully implemented in the zoning. |

Public Participation

The GMA requires early and continuous public participation (GOAL 11). As this proposal implements the Snohomish County GMA Comprehensive Plan FLU map adopted in 2024, the extensive public participation for that project serves as the early phase of public participation for this project.

In addition, the proposed May 27, 2025, public hearing by the Snohomish County Planning Commission will provide for continuing public participation. As required by SCC 30.73.050, postcard notice of that hearing will be mailed to the estimated 35,057 addresses for those parcels either proposed for rezones or within 500 feet of parcels proposed for rezones, providing for robust public participation.

Environmental Review

A State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Determination is required for the proposed area-wide rezones. The impacts of this proposal were studied in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Snohomish County 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update. An addendum to that EIS will be issued in advance of public hearing by the Planning Commission.

Notification of State Agencies

Pursuant to RCW 36.70A.106, a notice of intent to adopt the proposed regulations and standards will be transmitted to the Washington State Department of Commerce at the time this staff report is transmitted to the Snohomish County Planning Commission.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval of the proposed area-wide rezones and findings contained in this staff report.

Action Requested

The Planning Commission is requested to hold a public hearing, consider the proposed area-wide rezones, and provide a recommendation to the County Council. The Planning Commission can recommend approval of the area-wide rezones with supporting findings of fact as proposed or modified, deny the proposal with findings, or amend the proposal with appropriate findings.

cc: Ken Klein, Executive Director
Mike McCrary, PDS Director
David Killingstad, PDS Manager
Michael Dobesh, PDS Manager
Ryan Hembree, Legislative Analyst

Attachments

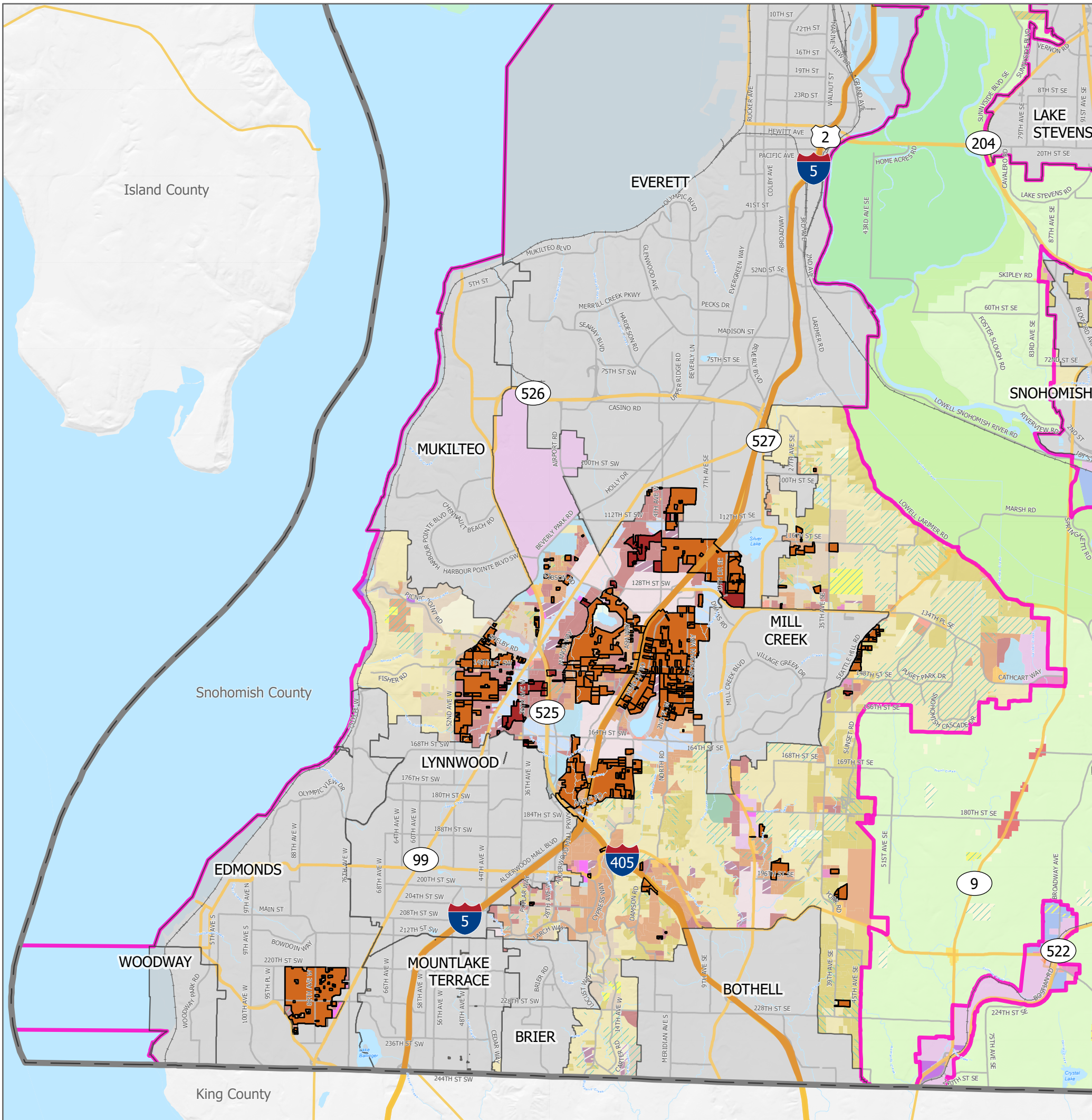
Attachment A: Draft Planning Commission Findings of Fact and Conclusions
Attachment B: Map, "2025 Area-wide Rezones"

Attachment A
Area-wide Rezones Implementing UMDR and UHDR Designations
Draft Planning Commission Findings

- A. The proposed ordinance will amend the Snohomish County official zoning map to adopt Low Density Multiple Residential (LDMR) and Multiple Residential (MR) zones to more fully implement the adopted future land use map.
- B. In developing the zoning amendments, the County considered the goals of the GMA identified in RCW 36.70A.020, specifically those goals related to urban growth, reducing sprawl, and permits. The proposed zoning amendments are reasonably related to, and necessary for, the advancement of the before mentioned GMA planning goals.
- C. The proposed zoning amendments comply with, and implement the goals, objectives, and policies of the MPPs, CPPs, and Snohomish County 2024 Comprehensive plan. In particular, the amendments will support planned growth and density within urban land and will streamline permitting processes.
- D. The proposed zoning amendments are consistent with the record as set forth in the PDS Staff Report dated April 4, 2025.
- E. Procedural requirements:
 - 1. The proposal is a Type 3 legislative action under SCC 30.73.010 and 30.73.020.
 - 2. As required by RCW 30.70A.106(1), a notice of intent to adopt the proposed zoning amendments has been transmitted to the Washington State Department of Commerce for distribution to state agencies in the coming months.
 - 3. State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), chapter 43.21C RCW, requirements with respect to this non-project action were satisfied through analysis in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Snohomish County 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update and an addendum to that EIS will be issued to that effect in the coming months.
 - 4. The public participation process for the proposed zoning amendments has complied with all applicable requirements of the GMA and SCC.
 - 5. As required by RCW 36.70A.370, the Washington State Attorney General last issued an advisory memorandum in October 2024 titled “Advisory Memorandum and Recommended Process for Evaluating Proposed Regulatory or Administrative Actions to Avoid Unconstitutional Takings of Private Property” to help local governments avoid unconstitutional takings of private property. The process outlined in the State Attorney General’s 2024 advisory memorandum was used by the County in objectively evaluating the regulatory changes in this proposal.

Attachment B

[Insert Zoning Map Here]



2025 Area-wide Rezones

Existing Zoning

F

F and R

F and R ORV

SA-1

A-10

RRT-10

R-5

RD

RC

R-20,000

R-12,500

R-9,600

R-9,600(PRD)

R-8,400

R-8,400(PRD)

R-7,200

R-7,200(PRD)

WFB

PRUD

F Forestry

F and R Forestry and Recreation

F and R ORV Forestry and Recreation-Off Road Vehicle

SA-1 Suburban Agriculture-1 Acre

A-10 Agriculture-10 Acre

RRT-10 Rural Resource Transition-10 Acre

R-5 Rural-5 Acre

RD Rural Diversification

RC Rural Conservation

R-20,000 Residential 20,000 sq. ft.

R-12,500 Residential 12,500 sq. ft.

R-9,600 Residential 9,600 sq. ft.

R-9,600(PRD) Residential 9,600 sq. ft. (Planned Residential Development)

R-8,400 Residential 8,400 sq. ft.

R-8,400(PRD) Residential 8,400 sq. ft. (Planned Residential Development)

R-7,200 Residential 7,200 sq. ft.

R-7,200(PRD) Residential 7,200 sq. ft. (Planned Residential Development)

WFB Waterfront Beach

PRUD Planned Residential Unit Devl.

T

LDMR

LDMR(PRD)

MR

MR(PRD)

MHP

RFS

NB

PCB

CB

UC

GC

RB

CRC

MUC

IP

PIP

BP

RI

LI

HI

T Townhouse

LDMR Low Density Multiple Residential

LDMR(PRD) Low Density Multiple Residential (Planned Residential Development)

MR Multiple Residential

MR(PRD) Multiple Residential (Planned Residential Development)

MHP Mobile Home Park

RFS Rural Freeway Service

NB Neighborhood Business

PCB Planned Community Business

CB Community Business

UC Urban Center

GC General Commercial

RB Rural Business

CRC Clearview Rural Commercial

MUC Mixed-Use Corridor

IP Industrial Park

PIP Planned Industrial Park

BP Planned Industrial Park

RI Rural Industrial

LI Light Industrial

HI Heavy Industrial

PRD SA-1

PRD-20,000

PRD-20,000(Mobile)

PRD-12,500(Mobile)

PRD-9,600

PRD-8,400

PRD-7,200

PRD-7,200(Mobile)

PRD-LDMR

PRD-MR

PRD-CB

PRD SA-1 Planned Residential Development Suburban Agriculture-1 Acre

PRD-20,000 Planned Residential Development 20,000 sq. ft.

PRD-20,000(Mobile) Planned Residential Development (Mobile) Residential 20,000 sq. ft.

PRD-12,500(Mobile) Planned Residential Development (Mobile) Residential 12,500 sq. ft.

PRD-9,600 Planned Residential Development 9,600 sq. ft.

PRD-8,400 Planned Residential Development 8,400 sq. ft.

PRD-7,200 Planned Residential Development 7,200 sq. ft.

PRD-7,200(Mobile) Planned Residential Development (Mobile) Residential 7,200 sq. ft.

PRD-LDMR Planned Residential Development Low Density Multiple Residential

PRD-MR Planned Residential Development Multiple Residential

PRD-CB Planned Residential Development Community Business

Area Wide Zoning Amendments:

LDMR

MR

County Boundary

Incorporated City

Urban Growth Area (UGA) Boundary

Lakes

Streams

Road Types

Interstate

State Route

Arterial

Railroad

012 Miles

N

Date: 03/19/2025

Snohomish County

Snohomish County Data and Map Disclaimer

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