



SNOHOMISH COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

July 1, 2025

Snohomish County Council
County Administration Building
3000 Rockefeller Avenue, M/S 609
Everett, WA 98201-4046

SUBJECT: Planning Commission recommendation on proposed area-wide rezones

Dear Snohomish County Council:

On behalf of the Snohomish County Planning Commission, I am forwarding our recommendation on this non-project proposal to amend the official zoning map to adopt area-wide rezones. The Planning Commission had a briefing on this topic on April 22, 2025, and conducted a public hearing on May 27, 2025.

The aim 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. The proposal is to amend the official zoning map for Snohomish County to rezone approximately 3,499 acres in the Southwest Urban Growth Area within those designations to Low Density Multiple Residential (LDMR) and Multiple Residential (MR) zoning. This proposal 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.

Forty (40) written comments were received by the Planning Commission from the public before the public hearing. Forty-one (41) members of the public commented at the public hearing. For those opposed to the proposed rezones, the majority cited concerns including service availability, traffic safety concerns, lack of infrastructure, lack of parking and sidewalks, an increase in crime, and the destruction of nature and wildlife. Many stated that the rezones were too broad and needed to be site-specific or offer targeted zoning. For those in favor, they cited the need to accommodate growth, the need for housing, and to follow regulations.

PLANNING COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Following the close of the hearing and prior to final vote on the motion to approve, the Planning Commission deliberated, and each commissioner offered comments to be included along with the recommendation, which are summarized below:

- **Commissioner Sheldon** – had concerns about what development under the area-wide rezones will look like going forward, and concerns that this type of area-wide rezone approach could later be applied in other areas further north.
- **Commissioner Chandler** – stated that the premise of the area-wide rezone proposal is something that needs to happen to accommodate growth, but that concerns about service and traffic were very high. Traffic studies need to be presented upon application, and traffic and parking need to be addressed at the project level. Also, there are concerns about sites that are heavily constrained with critical areas that would likely be addressed by developers not choosing to develop those properties.

- **Commissioner Busteed** – heard concerns about traffic and parking that are very valid given that parking standards are being reviewed to reduce parking requirements in some zones. Also heard concerns about the ability for new development to be so close together with existing homes, with walls blocking light. In addition, there is the need to review grading requirements and impacts for adjacent properties.
- **Commissioner Larsen** – expressed that for areas being rezoned it will be important to preserve parks and public open spaces, increase code enforcement, save trees including through incentives, lessen privacy impacts, and review needs for infrastructure, utilities, and services like public safety.
- **Commissioner Sievers** – stated that we are not unique in the issues we face with growth. Heard concerns about the cost of site work, and impacts of infill and grading for adjacent properties. Another concern that stands out is about public safety and emergency vehicle access. Also heard positive things about protecting salmon and streams. In smaller communities, people want space to live in, so it is important to be thoughtful about where we allow increased density in areas served by transit investments.
- **Commissioner Niemela** – suggested that people should contact their representatives if they support case-by-case proposals rather than blanket approaches. There also may be the ability repurpose vacant businesses to accommodate growth.
- **Commissioner Bush** – described that cities used to develop in natural ways, and then with zoning requirements we added limits, but now we are going in reverse because there is a need for more housing. It is challenging because this is a natural process to redevelop with higher densities. It is saddening to hear how it has impacted people because they bought with an idea of what the community would be like that now is changing. It is a complicated process. In areas near transit, creating more walkable communities is important, but that means having safe sidewalks. Money for infrastructure and services is always an issue. People are saving to buy a house, and the prices get higher and higher, and many do not need large houses on large lots if there are smaller houses and shared green spaces.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

At the May 27, 2025, Planning Commission meeting, Commissioner Sheldon made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Chandler, recommending APPROVAL of the proposed area-wide rezones contained in the staff report dated April 4, 2025.

Vote (Motion):

6 in favor (*Bush, Busteed, Chandler, Larsen, Niemela, Sievers*)

1 opposed (*Sheldon*)

Motion passed

The recommendation presented to the County Council within this motion was made following the close of the deliberations and after due consideration of information presented and is based on the findings and conclusions presented in the April 4, 2025, staff report.

Planning Commission Recommendation Letter
Area-wide Rezones
July 1, 2025

Respectfully submitted,

Robert W Larsen

Robert W Larsen (Jul 3, 2025 18:56 PDT)

SNOHOMISH COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
Robert Larsen, Chairman

cc: Dave Somers, Snohomish County Executive
Michael McCrary, Director, Planning and Development Services