

Keeping the Rural Vision

Protecting Rural Character & Planning for Rural Development



WASHINGTON STATE
COMMUNITY, TRADE AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Building Foundations for the Future

Cover

Orondo, located about a quarter of a mile from the Columbia River in Douglas County, was one of the first rural service centers designated under the GMA. Located 22 miles up river from Wenatchee, a new grocery store and bank were recently built to serve a growing rural population.

Photo: Rita R. Robison

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Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development

Tim Douglas, Director

Local Government Division

Steve Wells, Assistant Director

Text Prepared by

Heather Ballash, Senior Planner

Growth Management Program Staff

Shane Hope, Managing Director

Holly Gadbaw, Senior Planner

Rita R. Robison, Planner

Jan Unwin, Administrative Assistant

Post Office Box 48300

Olympia, Washington 98504-8300

(360) 753-2222 Fax: (360) 753-2950

June 1999

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Introduction

“The central question in defining rural is how to accommodate the demand for a rural lifestyle without diminishing the rural setting in the process.”

- Yakima County Comprehensive Plan

Rural communities are an essential part of the Northwest quality of life. Many people who live in rural areas expect to continue the rural lifestyle enjoyed by previous generations. Still others want to live in rural areas to enjoy their beauty while retaining the conveniences of an urban life. Reconciling these expectations with the need to manage the impacts of growth is a difficult job for many counties in Washington state.

Counties planning under the Growth Management Act (GMA) that are required to adopt a comprehensive plan need to include a Rural Element (a rural chapter) in their comprehensive plans for rural lands. The Rural Element is to include policies that protect rural character outside of urban growth boundaries.

Many of the 29 counties fully planning under the GMA have adopted their first GMA comprehensive plans and development regulations.¹ Some are still in the process of developing their plans and regulations, including the Rural Element. All counties, whether they have adopted plans and regulations or are in the process of adopting, are continuing to work on issues of rural development. They are considering approaches for the: (1) protection of rural character; (2) provision of rural

services; (3) reconciliation of existing development with the need to protect rural character; and (4) encouragement of appropriate economic development.

This guidance document supplements the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development’s (CTED) previous publication *Defining Rural Character and Planning for Rural Lands: A Rural Element Guide*. It is based on best planning practices, county experience, growth hearings board decisions, and 1997 amendments to the GMA in ESB 6094.² The guidance considers the need for state and county responses to listings of salmon and bull trout under the federal Endangered Species Act, including watershed planning.

The ESB 6094 amendments to the GMA are based on recommendations by the Land Use Study Commission. The amendments provide counties with tools to protect rural areas and to reconcile existing development with the need to protect rural character. They clarify what is required and allowed in rural areas through definitions of rural character, rural development, and rural governmental services. Language is also added to the definitions of urban growth and urban governmental services. The Rural Element includes requirements to provide for a variety of rural densities and to protect rural character. It also now provides optional tools for reconciling past development and allowing limited areas of more intense residential and economic development.

This guidance outlines the basic planning steps that counties should take to meet the requirements of the GMA for the Rural Element. Some approaches are provided to take advantage of the optional tools that may be used to reconcile past development and allow for more limited development within the rural area. In addition, land use options for rural economic development, including natural resource industries in the rural area are discussed. Examples of policies adopted by various counties are provided for each step discussed.³

Notes

¹ All 39 counties and their cities and towns have some requirements under the GMA, such as adopting critical areas ordinances. Twenty-nine counties are required to more fully plan, for example to adopt comprehensive plans and development regulations.

² RCW 36.70A.020(14), (15), (16); RCW 36.70A.070(5).

³ Examples from a number of counties are included. A comprehensive survey of all counties in the state was not conducted. If there are other policies that should be included, please contact the CTED Growth Management Program, and they will be added to the file of good examples.

Getting Started – Some Basic Steps

This guidance document assumes that the county has made some preliminary land use decisions before developing a Rural Element. For example, it is assumed, as a starting point, that each county has:

- Adopted county-wide planning policies under the GMA;¹
- Adopted critical area ordinances to protect environmental quality;
- Designated urban growth areas and significant natural resource lands;
- Used the population forecast from the state Office of Financial Management to identify how much population growth is expected in the rural lands, separate from the urban growth areas, for the next 20 years.²

Once the preliminary decisions have been made, certain basic steps are recommended for developing a Rural Element. These steps are: (1) review of the laws and guidebooks; (2) rural assessment; (3) development of a rural vision; (4) community vision within the GMA framework; and (5) monitoring.

1. Review of the Laws and Guidebooks

Rural planning should begin with a review of the applicable laws. For example:

- The GMA has a number of goals and requirements that relate to rural planning.³
- The GMA provides specific instructions for the Rural Element (or chapter) in RCW 36.70A.070(5), which was amended in 1997.
- Federal laws (for example, the Endangered Species Act) and other state laws (for example, the Shoreline Management Act) need to be considered.
- Definitions are provided in Appendix A to help explain GMA terms.
- The county-wide planning policies should have policies to guide rural development. (See Appendix B.)

Other good sources of information about rural planning are CTED guidebooks and model ordinances, including:

Before beginning its rural planning, a county needs to have adopted a critical areas ordinance, including measures to protect wetlands.



Growth Strategies Commission

- *Defining Rural Character and Planning for Rural Lands: A Rural Element Guide;*
- *Designating Your Community's Open Space: A Parks, Recreation and Open Space Planning Guide;*
- *Historic Preservation: A Tool for Managing Growth;* and
- a forthcoming guidebook on rural subdivisions.⁴

2. Rural Assessment

An assessment of existing conditions in the rural area is recommended. This step will help everyone involved in the planning process to understand what the rural lands are like now and to identify the opportunities and challenges.

To begin, each county identifies its rural lands and maps their location. Then the county should research such questions as:

- What different kinds of rural lands does the county have now?
- What gives each area its rural character? That is, what makes a particular place special?
- What kinds of land uses and development existed in different rural areas before the GMA took effect for the county? Where are these pre-GMA uses located?
- How do the adopted county-wide planning policies affect rural development?
- How many people currently live in the rural areas? How much of the county's expected population growth will be in these areas 20 years from now?
- What studies have already been done about the area? Are they still useful?

- What water resource issues does the county face?
- What historic and archaeological properties has the county identified and documented? Where are they located?⁵
- What role do rural lands play in natural resource use or production in the county?
- What are the environmental issues in the county? Economic issues? Social issues? Other issues?

Answers to these questions can be obtained through existing land use and environmental information, demographic information, meetings with citizens, community surveys, and work with state agencies.

3. Development of a Rural Vision

In this step, a broad cross-section of the community comes together and talks about their vision of the rural area for the next 20 or more years. A county's rural vision should be developed within the legal framework of the GMA and the county-wide planning policies. However, development of the rural vision will require specific decisions to be made within that framework. Citizen involvement will be essential to the process because residents are able to help answer questions like:

- What does rural mean for the community?
- How do the people in the community want to live? What kinds of activities and land uses does the community want? What are things the community doesn't want?
- What does the community want to change about its rural areas? What

does the community want to keep for future generations?

- Are there historic buildings, structures, sites, districts, landscapes, objects, and views that the community wants to preserve?
- How much new development can the community allow without hurting its rural quality of life? What kinds of development are appropriate?
- What is the role and importance of farms and forests?



Lauren Braden

Together, the community will come up with answers to these and other questions about the future it envisions for rural lands. People will consider what they want, what they think is realistically possible, and how this fits with the GMA or other laws. This community vision should be written down and used to help guide the county's definition of rural character and development of the Rural Element.

In many respects, development of the community vision of rural is the most important step in the planning process. The vision will guide how the county

defines and protects rural character, as well as how it provides for development. More information on visioning is contained in the CTED guidebook, *Defining Rural Character and Planning for Rural Lands: A Rural Element Guide*. Also of value is the National Park Service publication *National Register Bulletin 30: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes*. This document is available from the state Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation.

Citizen involvement is key to developing a county's rural vision.

4. Community Vision within the

GMA Framework

In developing a community vision, the framework of planning and environmental laws needs to be considered. Using information on existing conditions, citizen input, and the legal requirements to develop a community vision will be discussed in two later sections, The Heart of the Rural Element and Optional Tools for More Intense Development.

Upon adoption of a comprehensive plan, local governments need to adopt development regulations that are both consistent with and implement the plan.

Development regulations typically include ordinances for zoning, critical areas, subdivisions, planned unit developments, and concurrency. They also include the rules adopted within a local Shoreline Master Program. The plan and implementing regulations will be guided by and implement the community's vision of the rural area.

5. Monitoring

Finally, counties will need to monitor development in the rural area to determine whether the community vision of rural is consistent with actual changes. The county should check the assumptions of projected population against the rate of growth in the rural area.

Monitoring of the environmental impacts of development will provide valuable

information. For example, it will be important to track water quantity and quality, success in retaining open space and critical habitat, preservation of historic and archaeological properties, and conversion of forest and agricultural lands to other uses.

Notes

¹ See Appendix B for examples of rural county-wide planning policies.

² See Appendix C for more guidance on allocation of population to the rural area.

³ These provisions include, but are not limited to, RCW 36.70A.020; RCW 36.70A.030(14), (15), (16); RCW 36.70A.070(5).

⁴ CTED is preparing a guidebook on rural subdivisions.

⁵ Information on historic and archaeological properties can be obtained from the state Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, local historic preservation agencies, and Native American tribes.

The Heart of the Rural Element

This section outlines the three basic components of a rural element. They are: (1) defining and protecting rural character; (2) defining and planning for rural services; and (3) developing land use designations. These basic decisions set the framework for future planning and implementation efforts in the rural area.

1. Define and Protect Rural Character

Rural character embodies a quality of life based upon traditional rural landscapes, activities, lifestyles, and aesthetic values. Counties are required to include measures in the Rural Element that apply to rural development and protect rural character [RCW 36.70A.070(5)(c)]. Traditional rural lifestyles are defined by the county and its citizens based on rural lifestyles enjoyed by previous generations. Counties should develop goals and policies that will preserve traditional rural lifestyles, values, historic character, and aesthetics based on the county's rural vision and definition of rural character.

(a) Rural character defined

The concept of rural character will vary for different areas and different viewpoints. Long-time rural residents may define rural character in terms of working farms and forests. With this point of view, they should be more willing to accept limited services and amenities. Newcomers may have an image of quaint villages and tidy farms. They may also believe that they can save rural characteristics without giving up

Harmonizing the goals

As counties develop their Rural Element, they are required to develop a written record explaining how the Rural Element harmonizes the goals and meets the requirements of the GMA [RCW 36.70A.070(5)(a)].

their access to urban services. However, the availability of services and the need to protect rural character may preclude provision of urban services.

Each county must define rural character based upon the natural environment, historic properties, traditional rural lifestyles, and visual landscapes unique to its rural areas within the framework of the GMA.¹ "Rural character" is defined as the patterns of land use and development established by a county in the Rural Element of the comprehensive plan [RCW 36.70A.030(14)]:

- (a) In which open space, the natural landscape, and vegetation predominate over the built environment;
- (b) That foster traditional rural lifestyles, rural-based economies, and opportunities to both live and work in rural areas;
- (c) That provide visual landscapes that are traditionally found in rural areas and communities;
- (d) That are compatible with the use of the land by wildlife and for fish and wildlife habitat;
- (e) That reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development;

(f) That generally do not require the extension of urban governmental services; and

(g) That are consistent with the protection of natural surface water flows and ground water and surface water recharge and discharge areas.

Counties should develop their vision of rural character consistent with the definition in the law. The best source of information for what rural character means is the citizens who live and work in rural communities. Counties need to involve a broad cross-section of local citizens in defining traditional rural lifestyles, rural economic development, and visual landscapes.

Rural character will vary from county to county. Rural character may also vary within a county. A county is not required to develop a uniform vision that treats all rural areas alike. Rural character for different counties or different parts of a county depends on traditional rural economies, availability of capital facilities, and location and type of critical areas/resource lands. Rural residents can provide valuable information and input on what is appropriate to their specific area.

A county's rural area may consist of multiple subareas characterized by different uses, activities, or lifestyles. Some areas may be predominantly residential, while others are devoted to natural resource industry. Of those areas devoted to nonresidential uses, some may be primarily devoted to forestry while others are dependent on shellfish. These uses are mentioned because, in many rural areas, land that has not been designated a natural

resource of long-term commercial significance may still be used for commercial resource production. Examples include shellfish beds, woodlots, and small-scale farming. (See the section on Land Use Options for Rural Economic Development for a discussion of forestry and agriculture).

The Thurston County Comprehensive Plan Land Use Element includes a vision or Definition and Characteristics of Rural Areas:²

Rural areas are characterized by a balance between the natural environment and human uses with low density residential dwellings, farms, forests, mining areas, outdoor recreation and other open space activities. Commercial uses will be small in scale and will provide convenience services to the rural neighborhood. Industrial uses will generally be those that are related to and dependent on natural resources such as agriculture, timber or minerals. Home-based occupations and industries will be allowed throughout the rural area provided they do not adversely affect the surrounding residential uses.

Thurston County's implementing policies focus on priority rural area land uses and provisions for residential development.³

The Rural Element in the Pierce County comprehensive plan includes a discussion of rural character. In Pierce County, rural areas are characterized by low densities with scattered residential sites and moderate-sized to large open acreages for farm or forest use, often with an owner's home on such acreage.⁴

The Skagit County Rural Element includes a Rural Areas Definition and Characteristics and associated goal. The Skagit County rural landscape is “characterized as areas with open space; natural vegetation; is comprised of a variety of rural densities; farms, forests, mining and aquatic resource areas; small unincorporated rural communities; small, isolated rural commercial and industrial development; and regionally important recreation areas.”⁵

(b) Protecting rural character

Rural character needs to be maintained in the effort to provide for rural development. Although counties need to provide for a variety of rural densities, any provision for rural development must be consistent with, and protect, rural character. Rural development should be allowed but with adequate protection of the natural environment, historic properties, and rural lifestyles, uses, and landscapes.

RCW 36.70A.070(5)(c) provides that:

- The rural element shall include measures that apply to rural development and protect the rural character of the area, as established by the county, by:
- (i) Containing or otherwise controlling rural development;
 - (ii) Assuring visual compatibility of rural development with the surrounding rural area;
 - (iii) Reducing the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development in the rural area;
 - (iv) Protecting critical areas, as provided in RCW 36.70A.060,

- and surface water and ground water resources; and
- (v) Protecting against conflicts with the use of agricultural, forest, and mineral resource lands designated under RCW 36.70A.170.

To contain development, Snohomish County adopted policies limiting rural business development to five acres.⁶ Thurston County defined limited areas of more intense residential development based on their size and the percentage that had already been subdivided.⁷

Visual compatibility is an objective measure that will be developed based upon the county’s vision of rural character. It can be assured through development regulations and design standards, for example, density, size and location of clusters, screening from the roadway, and other requirements. Design elements or features such as meadows, woodlots, existing vegetation, mature landscaping, historic farmsteads, and archaeological sites can maintain rural characteristics if included as part of a development. Commercial storage facilities can be built to resemble farm buildings to blend in with rural character.

However, visual compatibility should not be used to preclude traditional rural uses by focussing on “prettiness.” RCW 36.70A.030(14) defines rural character to “provide visual landscapes that are traditionally found in rural areas and communities. . . .” Traditional structures, such as structures to support agriculture, may not always be aesthetically pleasing. But they are a part of and therefore visually compatible with the rural visual landscape.

A key component of visual compatibility for rural commercial and industrial areas is scale. In Snohomish County, rural commercial and industrial development has historically been small scale, generally not larger than the rural homes and farms that share the landscape with commercial uses. Rural commercial and industrial uses had traditionally been developed at a low intensity so that the natural landscape dominated the view over that of buildings, parking, or clearings. Small-scale rural commercial uses such as grocery stores, fruit stands, roadhouses, motels, seed-and-feed stores, lumber yards, or hardware stores not located within rural towns would be located on sites with minimal development for parking. The more recent trend in Snohomish County has been to assemble large sites, combining individual parcels and developing an assemblage of retail spaces in strip malls.⁸

Snohomish County has adopted plan policies to prevent the proliferation of strip commercial areas and to allow small, low intensity neighborhood businesses compatible with adjacent land uses. Developers in rural freeway service and rural industrial zones would be required to retain existing vegetation within buffers, minimize grading and filling, and retain all existing trees of three-inch caliper and larger in setbacks and buffers. The preclusion of strip malls should prevent further commercial sprawl in the rural area. The design standards, along with a prohibition on billboards, will help ensure visual compatibility with surrounding rural character.⁹

Pierce County is addressing visual compatibility through their community

plans for rural centers, which will recognize the rural lifestyle.¹⁰ Thurston County addresses the issue for residential uses through requirements in the rural cluster ordinance that require screening from the road, variance in lot size and shape, and limitations on type of uses in the resource parcel.¹¹

(c) Open space planning to protect rural character

Open space is many things to many people. Although not specifically defined in the GMA, it is clear that open space may come in a variety of sizes, shapes, and types and perform different functions, benefits, and purposes. The purpose of open space in rural areas may differ somewhat from its purpose in urban areas. But open space provides benefits common to both. There are more opportunities to protect open space in rural areas than in urban areas where most of the land has been developed.

The definition of open space in Chapter 84.34 RCW can be used as an operational definition. Open space includes lands which, through their preservation, would:

- Conserve and enhance natural or scenic resources;
- Protect streams or water supply;
- Promote conservation of soils, wetlands, beaches, or tidal marshes;
- Enhance the value to the public of abutting or neighboring parks, forests, wildlife preserves, nature reservations or sanctuaries, or other open space;
- Enhance recreation opportunities; and
- Preserve historic sites.



Mark Frev

Rural residents value rural character and open space that is the essence of rural character. Open space is essential for protection of wildlife habitat and water quality, as well as for preserving the value and character of historic rural landscapes. Open space designation along riparian corridors and other designated fish and wildlife conservation areas will be an important tool for counties responding to listings of salmon and bull trout under the Endangered Species Act. Historic designation may also be used to protect open spaces in addition to historic features within the landscape.

To ensure the predominance of open space, the natural landscape, vegetation, and historic properties in rural areas, CTED recommends counties develop county-wide open space plans. Open space lands perform numerous functions and provide numerous benefits. Briefly, open space lands provide:

- Active and passive recreational opportunity;
- Direct health and safety benefits (such as flood control, protection for water supply and groundwater recharge areas, cleansing of air, separation from hazards);
- Protection for important critical areas and natural systems (such as wetlands, tidal marshes, beaches);
- Identification and protection of wildlife habitat (such as riparian areas and other wildlife corridors necessary to migrating and spawning fish and other animals);
- Commercially significant resources and jobs (such as forestry, fishery, mineral and agricultural products) and other economic benefits including increased property value and increased tourism business – tourism is ranked among the top three employers in 40 states;¹²
- Natural features and open space important to defining rural character;
- Boundaries between incompatible uses – green belts can provide buffers between rural and natural resource lands of long-term commercial significance or between rural and urban lands; and

- Protection for the historic properties including historic and archaeological properties and other cultural resources. Protecting open spaces preserves the context in which historic rural communities and landscapes developed and changed.

An open space plan should include a meaningful system to maximize the benefit of open space lands. The open space plan must be integrated into overall planning and should include a number of regulatory and nonregulatory tools for implementation. Regulatory tools, for example, would include enforcement of critical areas ordinances that provide for vegetative buffers along streams and wetlands and limit development on steep slopes or other geologically hazardous areas. Nonregulatory tools include open space tax programs, public benefit rating systems, conservation futures, historic preservation tax incentives, and other land acquisition programs. For more information on open space planning, refer to the Growth Management Program's publications, *Designating Your Community's Open Space: A Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Planning Guide* and *Historic Preservation: A Tool for Managing Growth*.

Yakima County adopted open space and recreation policies that define open space to include hazardous critical areas, ecological critical areas, long-term commercially significant resource lands, lands which shape urban form, aesthetic value lands, selected cultural resources, and urban reserve lands. Comprehensive plan policies require consideration for increasing the continuity of designated open space areas, creating additional

incentive programs to protect open space, and outright purchasing of open space.¹³

Pierce County and its cities adopted county-wide planning policies on Natural Resources, Open Space, and Protection of Environmentally-Sensitive Lands.¹⁴ The policies require the county and each of the cities to:

- Consider as open space parks, recreational areas, greenbelts/natural buffers, scenic and natural amenities, or unique geological features or unique resources.
- Develop an open space plan.
- Designate appropriate open space.
- Encourage new housing to locate in a compatible fashion with open space designations or outside designated open space.
- Regulate and inventory open space.
- Provide for public and private acquisition of open space.

Pierce County's amended its comprehensive plan in 1997 to include open space policies that provide for:¹⁵

- Location criteria
- Established priorities for county programs which provide for open space
- Development of an open space plan
- An open space network
- An open space/greenbelts map
- An open space implementation committee
- Concurrency requirements for open space

Snohomish County adopted rural land use policies to provide that rural cluster subdivisions be used instead of standard residential subdivisions in rural areas.¹⁶

The open space tracts in these subdivisions must be preserved. If and when a subdivision is added to the urban growth area (UGA), open space may then be reconsidered for other zoned uses, if appropriate, and if open space levels of service are being maintained within the UGA.

2. Define and Plan for Rural Services

Determining what public facilities and services are appropriate in rural areas is difficult for many counties. The GMA requires counties to designate UGAs and

governmental services or rural services as:

[T]hose public services and public facilities historically and typically delivered at an intensity usually found in rural areas, and may include domestic water systems, fire and police protection services, transportation and public transit services, and other public utilities associated with rural development and normally not associated with urban areas. Rural services do not include storm or sanitary sewers, except as otherwise authorized by RCW



Rita R. Robison

Counties need to determine what services are appropriate for rural areas.

to limit extension or expansion of urban governmental services outside of UGAs, except when they are necessary to protect public health and safety and the environment, are financially supportable at rural densities, and do not support urban development. The GMA as initially adopted in 1990 and 1991 did not include a definition of rural governmental services.

ESB 6094 amended RCW 36.70A.030(16) to define rural

36.70A.110(4).

Provision of services, or infrastructure, is one of the strongest tools available to a county to implement a comprehensive plan under the GMA. An important aspect of the comprehensive plan is the integration of capital improvements (services such as roads, parks, sewer, and water) with incentives and regulations. Land use designations and regulations alone are not sufficient to control the use of infrastructure. Over time, when services are overbuilt relative to the land use they serve, there will be

pressure to use the infrastructure or services to the designed capacity. In other words, rural areas with suburban or urban levels of service will likely be under constant pressure to be re-designated to a higher more urban density and use.

Land use designations should be, in part, based on a county's ability to provide infrastructure and services. The challenge is to assure that the rural services are in balance (as measured by the type, design, and capacity of the services provided) with the developing rural area's planned character, land use, and density.

The comprehensive plan should include a definition of what services the county considers appropriate for the rural area and level of service standards for each identified service. These definitions should be consistent with the statutory definition.

(a) Define and plan for rural capital facilities

As with the Land Use Element and Capital Facilities Element of the comprehensive plan, consistency between the Rural Element and the Capital Facilities Element is essential. The Rural Element is the "land use element" for rural areas in the comprehensive plan. In order to encourage appropriate rural development, the county must plan for rural services that are consistent with and support that development.

As various agencies seek to implement their respective goals, policies, and programs consistent with the GMA

jurisdiction's comprehensive plan, each organization is also implementing the jurisdiction's plan. In Douglas County, the county planning staff works with a diverse group of service providers including state agencies; school districts; port districts; and sewer, water, drainage, and other districts to coordinate development inside and outside of UGA boundaries. The group has realized substantial savings by holding monthly breakfast meetings to reach their long-term consistency objectives.

Snohomish County adopted county-wide planning policies to address provision of rural services, including:¹⁷

- Establish level of service standards for rural development.
- Establish rural infrastructure standards that are consistent with appropriate rural development patterns and densities. In general, such standards will preclude the development of public wastewater collection and public stormwater collection systems in rural areas, reflecting lower densities and land coverages in these areas. Public water supply systems may be developed in the rural areas to meet the requirements of rural residents. Water sources and transmission lines may be developed in rural areas to meet the needs of urban growth areas.

In Pierce County, rural areas are characterized by having individual services (septic tanks, water wells) and/or by district services (some water, fire, and sewer districts) and having minimal roads (except thoroughfares).¹⁸

Although Yakima County's plan has no provisions for rural levels of service separate from urban levels of service, rural land use designations are based upon the level of service of existing capital facilities as follows:¹⁹

- Rural settlement allows up to 4 dwelling units/acre with water and sewer;
- Rural transitional (existing densities were between rural and suburban) allows 1 dwelling unit/2.5 acres or 1 dwelling unit/2 acres with clustering and a community water system;
- Rural remote (steep slopes and floodways) allows constrained development of 1 dwelling unit/40 acres;
- Rural self sufficient is between transitional and remote and allows 1 dwelling unit/10 acres or 1 dwelling unit/5 acres with a self sufficient well and septic. It is generally 1 dwelling unit/10 acres, with 1 dwelling unit/5 acres allowed if on a paved road and within five miles of a fire station.

Clark County has specified different levels of service for rural areas and rural centers and established levels of services for a wide variety of services.²⁰ The level of service standards includes private wells for water, septic systems for sewage, open conveyance and on site treatment for storm drainage, sheriff services, fire flow of 500 gpm and a fire protection rating of six or less for fire services, access to regional parks, bookmobile for library services, and centralized collection and voluntary recycling for solid waste.

For rural centers in Clark County, the level of service standards includes public

water, community septic systems, regional runoff treatment and control for storm drainage, allowing location of schools, sheriff services with a potential for a neighborhood headquarters, a fire protection rating of six or better, the potential for neighborhood parks, bookmobiles for library service, and centralized collection and mandatory recycling for solid waste services.²¹

(b) Define and plan for rural transportation facilities

Transportation planning is important to land use planning in the rural area for many reasons. First, planning allows the county to consider the provision of adequate levels of service within a larger transportation system. Second, it is important to address the need to preserve rural access to the land in a safe, efficient, and effective manner. Third, planning is instrumental in preventing sprawling development, which can lead to increases in both road maintenance costs (from rising demands for rural services) and operational budgets while constraining new road construction. Excessive development of roads in the rural area can contribute to the proliferation of sprawl.

Each county fully planning under the GMA should define adequate transportation and transit services for their respective rural areas. The transportation plan should be based on certain assumptions about the distribution of future land uses (growth patterns) in rural areas. These land use assumptions must be consistent with the recommendations of each of the other elements identified in the plan as well as with the goals of the GMA.

Providing clear linkages between the Rural Element and the various transportation functional plans being implemented through the public works department of a jurisdiction is a key strategy for comprehensive plan implementation. What are the linkages between the rural transportation planning issues and rural development? In many rural areas where little growth is occurring, the primary transportation issue is preservation of existing roads. The Rural Element of the comprehensive

important. An understanding of how rural villages, rural subdivisions, and natural resource industries use these rural routes is vital. Some rural roads may be traditional farm to market routes, heavily dependent upon the jurisdiction to maintain the road in excellent condition. Other roads may be serving only a few residents in remote areas.

Each community should adopt a functional classification system to group streets and roads according to the level



Rita R. Robison

Transportation planning allows a county to evaluate its road system and decide how to meet the needs of rural residents, in keeping with rural character.

plan and the road classification system should be consistent with each other. In rural areas, the primary purpose of a road is to provide access to land that may often lie between urbanizing areas and resource lands. An understanding of this primary function of a road is

of service they are intended to provide. In Yakima County, the rural transportation network is divided into the following three functional classifications: Rural Major Collector, Rural Minor Collectors, and Rural Local Access roads.²² These classifications

comprise over 1,600 miles rural road infrastructure in Yakima.

The Yakima County public works office has further defined these rural routes by surface typing, including the following categories: unimproved, gravel, bituminous surface treatment, asphalt, and concrete. Some key questions will determine the long-term development and maintenance of such a rural road network. For example, at what average daily trip level does the engineer recommend that a rural route be surfaced with gravel, bituminous surface treatment, or a longer lasting surface treatment?

A county planning for rural areas must be clear on the guidelines regarding the provision of access to rural lands. This means that transportation must be done with a rural context in mind. A county with rural lands must analyze the functions and performance of the roads that serve these areas. The cost of maintenance for roadway surfaces, snow removal, weed control, tree removal, and general safety features must be borne by the county over the life of the plan.

According to *Vermont State Standards*:²³

It is essential that all transportation facilities be designed as part of the total environment. . . . Roads and bridges should be designed to specifically fit into the situational context of the area within which each will be constructed, i.e., city, town, village, suburban, rural areas.

The most prominent rural settings are agricultural areas, wooded hillsides,

riverine valleys, and mountainous areas. Each of these areas have characteristics that should be considered in roadway design. For example, consideration of aesthetics, topographical features, historical features or landscapes, environmental sensitivity, and land use (access) needs.

Preserving rural character should be closely integrated with roadway design techniques. The relative location of a road may either enhance or detract from the working rural landscape. Some of the design techniques that may be used to maximize the fit between rural roads and rural landscapes are:

- Aligning roads to compliment the natural topography;
- Avoiding bisection of open fields and agricultural lands;
- Avoiding critical areas;
- Placing guardrails so they do not block views and vistas;
- Using landscape features to blend roadways and bridges into the natural setting;
- Using locally available materials (stone and plant materials) to blend both colors and textures into the setting;
- Finding or creating ways to enhance vegetative buffers adjacent to wetlands, natural habitat areas, or shorelands;
- Using alternative strategies for slope retention and more natural-appearing treatments;
- Grading easements or additional rights-of-way to allow blending of roadway side slopes with the adjacent landscape; and
- Designing bridges to consider the effects of visual intrusion on the state's waterways; visual and public

access to waterways; and appropriate pedestrian and bicycle crossings.

For a complete discussion of transportation planning under the GMA refer to the CTED publication *Your Community's Transportation System: A Transportation Element Guidebook*.

3. Develop Land Use Designations for the Rural Area

Traditional rural patterns of development consist of concentrations of population or centers surrounded by working or natural open spaces. These types of patterns are supported by the Rural Element requirement that the county provide for a variety of rural densities. But the county must take care that these densities are not characterized by urban growth and are consistent with rural character [RCW 36.70A.070(5)(b)]. It must also meet the measures governing rural development in RCW 36.70A.070(5)(c) as discussed above.

A variety of rural densities can be achieved through clustering, density transfers, design guidelines, conservation easements, and other innovative techniques. Higher densities may also be allowed in limited areas of more intense development. Innovative techniques and the criteria for limited areas of more intense development are discussed in the Optional Tools for More Intense Development section on page 23.

(a) Rural land use designations/ rural development

Rural development can consist of a variety of uses and residential densities if they are consistent with the preservation of rural character and the

requirements of the Rural Element. Counties should establish land use designations and residential densities that reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development in the rural area. The primary purpose of rural areas is not to accommodate growth. That is the function of urban areas.

Minimum lot sizes relating to viable resource use should be designated in rural areas where agriculture, forestry, and other resource uses predominate. These lot sizes may be especially appropriate in a transition area adjacent to designated resource lands of long-term commercial significance or critical areas. CTED and the Department of Natural Resources generally recommend residential densities of 1 dwelling unit/20 acres in rural agricultural and forest lands.

Rural agricultural and forest lands are distinguished from agricultural and forest lands of long-term commercial significance. Some counties have designated rural and/or long-term commercial natural resource lands. Even if agricultural land does not meet the criteria for long-term commercial, smaller farms can be an important source of income for rural residents. Designation of rural forest lands, in addition to forest lands of long-term commercial significance, recognizes the importance of small forest holdings in the rural area for timber production and protection of wildlife habitat.

The Pierce County comprehensive plan includes three general land use designations in the rural area: Rural Five at 1 dwelling unit/5 acres; Rural 10 at 1 dwelling unit/10 acres; and Rural

Reserve adjacent to the UGA at 1 dwelling unit/5 acres or 1 dwelling unit/10 acres, with provisions for later infill upon expansion of the UGA.²⁴

The Kitsap County Rural and Resource Lands Element designates four land uses:²⁵ Urban Reserve at 1 dwelling unit/10 acres; Rural Residential at 1 dwelling unit/5 acres; Rural Protection at 1 dwelling unit/10 acres; and Interim Rural Forest at 1 dwelling unit/20 acres.²⁶

The Yakima County Rural Element of the comprehensive plan provides for four types of land use designations. Rural settlement and rural transitional are delineated within specific areas of the county based upon existing conditions. See pages 14 to 15 for a list of these designations with densities.

Although they were adopted prior to the 1997 amendments to RCW 36.70A.070(5), all of these counties' designations are similar to the existing areas provision in the amendments.

(b) Protection of critical areas, surface and ground water, and historic properties

The county should have already designated and adopted ordinances to protect critical areas prior to development of the comprehensive plan. The Rural Element should include land use designations consistent with critical area and Shoreline Master Program designations. Land uses should be consistent with protection of shorelines, aquifer recharge areas, wellheads, frequently flooded areas, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, and

designated historic properties or areas of archaeological sensitivity.

For example, shorelines deserve special consideration when determining rural



Rita R. Robison

The Rural Element should include land use designations consistent with protection of critical areas.

densities and lot sizes. Many counties have allowed the proliferation of long and skinny lots along the shoreline to provide maximum access to the water. This has resulted in a high incidence of damage to the shoreline environment, including erosion, bank failures, disturbance of archaeological sites, and shellfish beach closures. The problem is especially severe where steep and unstable bluffs predominate. The width of new lots, especially within natural and conservancy designations, should be

limited to prevent the proliferation of long and skinny lots along shorelines.

The Kitsap County Zoning Code provides that rural lot depths and widths must be shown in a ratio of 2:1, where no lot depth or width is greater than two

Rural lands can provide an important transition between commercial forest lands and highly developed areas.



Rural areas will typically border both UGAs and natural resource lands. They will frequently be in a position to provide a transition between these two vastly different types of areas. Rural residential development, especially cluster developments, can create conflicts with resource land operations.

Courtesy of Rita R. Robison

times the corresponding lot depth or width.²⁷ This should help prevent the proliferation of skinny lots along shorelines.

Consistency with watershed plans is also important. Many counties will be working on watershed plans as part of their response to listings of salmon and bullhead trout under the Endangered Species Act. Conservation of rural lands will: (1) minimize new impervious surfaces that block aquifer recharge and contribute to stormwater runoff; (2) retain vegetation for habitat and erosion control; and (3) generally limit development impacts on riparian areas.

(c) Protection against conflicts with resource land uses

To avoid potential conflicts, CTED provides the following suggestions:

- Limit incompatible uses and/or require buffering adjacent to resource lands rather than imposing restrictions on resource production.
- Limit the amount of interface between rural and resource lands by designating large blocks of rural and resource lands.
- Take advantage of natural features to provide buffers.
- Provide a transition of uses and densities to encourage small-scale farming or woodlot operations adjacent to resource lands.
- Avoid siting rural residential uses such that access requires crossing expanses of natural resource lands.

- Assure development is designed to prevent wildfire.²⁸
- Adopt right-to-farm and forestry ordinances, including notice on the title of adjacent property owners.²⁹
- Identify and designate historic properties and historic districts for use as a buffering tool.³⁰

(d) Provision for urban reserve – large lots and phased development

Some counties have designated rural land adjacent to the UGA for future expansion of the UGA. It may be appropriate for counties to designate land for future expansion of the UGA if the UGA boundaries are tightly drawn and lots in the urban reserve are large and configured for future subdivision. Lots should be platted and structures located consistent with future use of the land.

Large lot sizes are appropriate if land is being held in reserve until adequate facilities are available to support urban development. Lot sizes of 10 to 20 acres or larger should be used if this method is selected to reserve land for future urban expansions. However, large lot zoning should be limited to lands that are not designated resource lands of long-term commercial significance and are adjacent to the UGA. Provisions for phasing in of higher densities should be made dependent upon provision of urban services and a well-documented need for additional land inside the UGA.

The Kitsap County zoning code includes provisions in the Urban Reserve zone for pre-planned subdivision at urban densities in the event that the land is later included in the UGA.³¹ The

conceptual preplan must include adequate provisions for access to all lots including identifying rights-of-way or easements for future roads or streets, drainage facilities, and utilities. The preplan is approved in concept only, with no approval rights for future subdivision. Any future subdivision is subject to all applicable laws at the time of application. Thus, subdivision will not be allowed at preplanned urban densities unless and until the area is designated a UGA.

See also the discussion of Snohomish County provisions in the open space planning section on page 12.

Notes

¹ Historic properties are an element of the built environment. See Appendix A for a definition of historic properties.

² Thurston County, *Thurston County Comprehensive Plan*, Land Use Element, III B. Rural Areas Designations, p. 2-13.

³ Thurston County, *Thurston County Comprehensive Plan*, Land Use Element, Goal 1, pp. 2-33 to 2-34.

⁴ Pierce County, *Comprehensive Plan for Pierce County, Washington*, Rural Element, p. III-2.

⁵ Skagit County, *Skagit County Comprehensive Plan*, Rural Element, p. 6-2.

⁶ Snohomish County, *Snohomish County GMA Comprehensive Plan*, Land Use Policy 6.F.7, p. LU-25.

⁷ Thurston County, *Thurston County Comprehensive Plan*, Land Use Element, pp. 2-14 to 2-19.

⁸ Snohomish County, *Snohomish County Rural Commercial and Industrial General Policy Plan and Zoning Code Amendments*, Final Report, July 1997, pp. 4-5.

⁹ Snohomish County, *Snohomish County GMA Comprehensive Plan*, Land Use Element, Policies LU 6.G and 6.H.

¹⁰ Pierce County, *Comprehensive Plan for Pierce County, Washington*, Rural Element.

¹¹ Thurston County, *Thurston County Zoning Ordinance*, Chapter 20.

¹² Global Cities Project, “Open Space: Preservation and Acquisition,” *Building*

Sustainable Communities: An Environmental Guide for Local Governments (San Francisco: n.p.), 1991.

¹³ Yakima County, *Yakima County Comprehensive Plan*, pp. I-98 to I-100.

¹⁴ Pierce County *County-wide Planning Policies*, Policies 10-17.

¹⁵ Pierce County, *Comprehensive Plan for Pierce County, Washington*, 19A.30.170.

¹⁶ Snohomish County *GMA Comprehensive Plan*, Land Use Policy 6.B.1, p. LU-19.

¹⁷ Snohomish County *County-wide Planning Policies*, Policies RU-1 and RU-3.

¹⁸ Pierce County, *Comprehensive Plan for Pierce County, Washington*, Land Use Element, p. III-2.

¹⁹ Yakima County, *Yakima County Comprehensive Plan*, Rural Lands Sub-element, pp. VIII-R-6 to VII-R-7.

²⁰ Clark County, *20-Year Clark County Comprehensive Growth Management Plan*, Capital Facilities Element, Table 6.14, p. 6-24.

²¹ Rural centers in Clark County are areas distinguished by small lot development with a definite edge in the rural area. See discussion of Limited Areas of More Intense Development on page 23 for more information on these types of areas and why they may be appropriately served with a different level of service than the surrounding rural area.

²² Yakima County, *Yakima County Comprehensive Plan*, Transportation Element, p. XI-6.

²³ State of Vermont Agency of Transportation, *Vermont State Standards for the Design of Transportation, Construction, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation on Freeways, Roads, and Streets*, October 22, 1997.

²⁴ Pierce County, *Comprehensive Plan for Pierce County, Washington*, Rural Element, Policy 2.3.

²⁵ Kitsap County, *Kitsap County Comprehensive Plan*, Rural and Resource Lands Element, Policy RL-2.

²⁶ The interim forest designation is a rural forest designation that permits timber harvesting and management pending review of the county's forest criteria and a determination whether these lands should be designated of long-term commercial significance.

²⁷ Kitsap County, *Kitsap County Zoning Code*, Sections 305, 310, and 315.

²⁸ See CTED's *Optional Comprehensive Plan Element for Natural Hazard Reduction*, or contact the Department of Natural Resources for more information on fire prevention in rural areas.

²⁹ The enforceability of these ordinances may be limited with respect to farming and forestry practices that create a public nuisance or public health or safety hazards for nearby residents.

³⁰ For example, a farm or an archaeological site could act as buffers. If the farm or site is evaluated as significant, these properties could be designated and protective measures applied. The action would preserve these properties as open spaces that would buffer rural from urban land uses or other conflicting uses. Covenants, design restrictions, or open space valuation could be used as the protective mechanism.

³¹ Kitsap County, *Kitsap County Zoning Code*, Section 315.090.

Optional Tools for More Intense Development

Open space, the natural landscape, and vegetation should predominate in the rural area. The result will be a pattern of low-density development throughout most of the rural area. However, many counties struggle with how to reconcile pre-existing development in the rural area with the need to protect rural character. The GMA as originally enacted provided a number of options for recognizing existing areas of more intense development and for allowing limited commercial and industrial development in the rural community. The amendments in ESB 6094, RCW 36.70A.070(5), provide some additional tools for the GMA toolbox of options for rural areas.

These tools are not requirements of the GMA. They are optional and in some cases are very limited exceptions to the requirements of the GMA.

1. Limited Areas of More Intense Development

Many developments were built or vested in rural areas prior to development



Mark Frey

and/or adoption of county comprehensive plans. These existing developments may be unincorporated towns, development that has grown up around roadside commercial establishments, sprawling low-density subdivisions, or widely scattered subdivisions. These developments may or may not be served by sewer, water, fire, and other public services. Counties struggle to reconcile these existing developments with the need to prevent further sprawl and protect the remaining rural character.

In enacting the amendments to RCW 36.70A.070(5), the Legislature recognized that counties needed some tools for providing a variety of densities, reconciling existing development, and allowing some infill of existing development in rural areas, while retaining their ability to protect rural character. The amendments to the Rural Element requirements provide some exceptions to address these needs. These exceptions are available to a county at its option.

In limited circumstances, the county may recognize existing areas or existing uses

Recent amendments to the GMA offer counties ways to reconcile existing areas of dense development with the need to protect the remaining rural character.

and may provide for infill, development, or redevelopment within these areas. Logical outer boundaries must be drawn to minimize and contain more intense development. The boundaries are delineated predominantly by the built environment. These limited areas of more intense development must have been in existence as of July 1, 1990, or on the date the county opted to, or was required to, plan under the GMA.

The GMA does not require that these designations be made at a specific step in the planning process. They could be made in the comprehensive plan, in an amendment to the comprehensive plan, or in the development regulations. The only limitations on designation are those provided in the GMA regarding how limited areas of more intense development may be delineated. Also, once delineated, the logical outer boundaries of these areas are not subject to the review and revision procedures required for UGAs. The boundary could only be revised if the county's updated population projection justified the need to re-designate the area as a UGA. As the provisions for designation are optional, counties may or may not choose to take advantage of them.

CTED has reviewed the requirements for limited areas of more intense development and has developed a suggested approach for delineating these areas. This approach is not required by RCW 36.70A.070(5) but was developed based upon the statutory requirements and the experience of a number of counties.

(a) County map of existing conditions – platted lots

The county must first look at existing conditions in the rural area to identify existing areas or uses. RCW 36.70A.070(d) states, "Existing areas are those that are clearly identifiable and contained and where there is a logical boundary delineated predominantly by the built environment, but that may also include undeveloped lands if limited as provided in this subsection."

RCW 36.70A.070(d)(v) defines existing area or existing use as one that was in existence either:

- On July 1, 1990, in a county initially required to plan under the GMA;
- On the date the county adopted a resolution to plan under the GMA; or
- On the date the office of financial management certified the county's population as provided in RCW 36.70A.040(5) such that the county will be required to plan under the GMA.

These criteria provide guidance in establishing the logical outer boundary, but the guidance is predicated on there being existing areas or uses. There must be more than existing zoning because designation must rely on the built environment.¹

Based on these criteria from the GMA, CTED recommends that the county develop a parcel map that identifies all lots platted at densities higher than the density generally permitted in the rural area and that:

- Were platted before July 1, 1990 (or the date the county was required or chose to plan under GMA); or
- Have been built upon.

Areas can be color-coded based upon which higher density lots were platted before July 1, 1990 (or applicable date) and which lots have been developed.

This step is suggested to help a county identify those areas that qualify as existing areas. The logical outer boundary must be delineated predominately by the built environment but can include lots in existence as of the date the county was required or chose to plan. By determining where these higher density lots are located, a county can identify concentrations of lots that may be appropriate for designation as limited areas of more intense development. Although these areas should be delineated predominantly by the built environment, they may include a limited amount of undeveloped lands.

Thurston County produced a map that identified all platted lots. The lots were

color-coded based upon size. The county looked at lots platted before 1937 to verify whether they were legal and whether they had been built upon. They had no GIS information on built lots, but they were able to use aerial photographs to determine what had been developed.

Island County also did an inventory of platted lots. However, to save staff time and resources, the county did not attempt to identify every lot in the rural area. They limited their survey to lots below a certain size. They recognized that lots larger than two and a half acres, for example, would probably not be appropriate to consider for designation for more intense development because existing development is at a density more consistent with the plan's general rural residential density.

(b) Critical areas overlay map

An overlay should then be developed to identify and map areas where:

- Preservation of rural character is important, for example, open space,

Mapping critical areas, such as this Thurston County shoreline area, can help determine where dense development may or may not be appropriate in the rural area.



Thurston Regional Planning Council

fish and wildlife habitat, historic rural landscapes and other cultural resources, and agricultural uses and/or prime agricultural soils.

- Protection of critical or other sensitive areas is important, for example, shoreline areas where water quality or salmon habitat is a problem, shoreline conservancy and natural resource designations, aquifer recharge areas, steep slopes, and areas where the soil is not suitable for septic tank drainage.

An open space plan, if one has been prepared, should help identify these areas.

Thurston County mapped areas with prime agricultural soils and highly productive forest lands, critical areas, aquaculture areas, areas with erosion and water quality problems, shoreline designations, and other sensitive lands. When the county considered designation and upzoning of some rural areas for more intense development, this mapped information was used to determine if these areas were appropriate for higher density designations.

(c) Infrastructure overlay map

The county must provide public facilities and public services to serve the limited areas of more intense development in a manner that does not permit low-density sprawl under RCW 36.70A.070(5). A second overlay map should be prepared to identify and map areas currently served by water, septic or sewer systems, adequate roads, and other public facilities and services. A capital facilities map with service areas and conveyance facilities should already be

available as part of the comprehensive plan.

Many of the areas being considered will be on wells and septic systems. In developing the overlay, a review by the county health department may be appropriate to determine whether additional development can be served with water and septic. For example, Island County decided to exclude some areas from consideration because of salt water intrusion.

Yakima County designated rural settlement (4 dwelling units/acre) and rural transitional (1 dwelling unit/2.5) based upon the availability of water and/or sewer.² Snohomish County requires that rural business zones have adequate water, fire protection including fire flow, and septic systems.³

(d) Criteria for more intense development

The next step is to develop criteria for identifying existing areas of more intense development in the rural area where infill may occur. The criteria should be based on RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d), Limited Areas of More Intense Rural Development. Rural development is limited to infill, development, or redevelopment of existing commercial, industrial, residential, or mixed-use areas. Each of these developments must be limited to existing areas or uses that are delineated by a logical outer boundary. The logical outer boundary should be delineated predominantly by the built environment but may include a limited amount of undeveloped lands. The types of areas that have generally been identified and delineated by counties are rural villages,

rural towns, rural activity centers, or rural subdivisions.

In developing criteria, counties should keep in mind that additional infill development at higher densities may require more extensive public services. Any increase in intensity or density of development will also require more stringent environmental controls to mitigate the impacts of development in a rural area.

The presence of critical areas may result in eliminating an area from consideration for designation or in imposing more stringent standards for critical area protection. In determining the impact of including an area of more intense development, a consideration will be the amount of room available for additional development. If designation results in simply recognizing an existing area with limited development potential, the additional impacts to critical areas and to infrastructure may be minimal.

Thurston County included some general criteria for higher residential densities within the rural area based upon existing development and environmental constraints in the comprehensive plan.⁴ The county then developed a zoning ordinance for the rural area that more specifically defines residential areas of more intense development. The ordinance limits and defines existing areas by their size and the percentage already subdivided. The county analyzed nonshoreline areas of 80 acres or more and shoreline areas of 40 acres or more. These area thresholds were used to cull out the scattering of individual or small groupings of one-half to two-acre size lots that can be found in the rural area. To qualify for higher

density zoning, the ordinance requires that at least 50 to 75 percent of a nonshoreline area and at least 90 percent of a shoreline area must have already been subdivided into small lots.

Generally speaking, Thurston County found that each higher density area had similarly sized parcels. The zoning designation was based on the predominant parcel size of each area. The higher density rural zoning districts are 2 dwelling units/acre, 1 dwelling unit/acre, and 1 dwelling unit/2 acres. As noted above, these areas contain only residential development. For a discussion of Thurston County's rural commercial and industrial designations, see Land Use Options for Rural Economic Development on page 38.

In 1997, Snohomish County adopted locational criteria in its comprehensive plan policy for rural business zones that include:⁵

- A minimum of 600 residential dwelling units within a two-and-one-half mile radius of the proposed site;
- No other areas designated or zoned commercial within two-and-one-half miles;
- A maximum area of five acres of net usable area;
- No closer than one mile to a UGA boundary; and
- Size and configuration capable of accommodating setbacks, buffers, critical areas protection, and other site planning and design techniques that permit small-scale, rural commercial development characteristics.

Whatcom County adopted designation criteria in its plan policies for a variety

of rural centers.⁶ The criteria include identification of pre-existing small lot development patterns, natural features such as boundaries, and access to arterials. Rural centers have defined edges and are surrounded by a rural landscape. They are required to provide a focus for the surrounding rural area that is appropriate in character and scale, appropriate commercial development to serve adjoining rural areas, services to tourists, and community center facilities. Commercial development serves the needs of rural residents and natural resource activities. Strip development should be discouraged.

(e) Logical outer boundaries

The county should draw lines on the map around the areas that meet the criteria it has developed for areas of more intense development. This requires developing specific enough criteria for designating existing areas of built and some platted lots so that these areas are clearly identifiable and tightly contained. Areas within the logical outer boundary can include some undeveloped property. However, the county must adopt measures to minimize and contain the existing areas or uses of more intensive rural development [RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)(iv)].

In establishing the logical outer boundary under RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)(iv), the county must also address:

- (A) The need to preserve the character of existing natural neighborhoods and communities;
- (B) Physical boundaries such as bodies of water, streets and highways, and land forms and contours;

- (C) The prevention of abnormally irregular boundaries; and
- (D) The ability to provide public facilities and public services in a manner that does not permit low-density sprawl.

Many counties have recognized existing towns and villages in the rural area because these communities have been serving rural residents for years. While their plans with provisions for these areas were adopted prior to the enactment of ESB 6094, the concepts are similar.

Thurston County developed the criteria to create areas large enough to be defined as a neighborhood or a small community.⁷ Lines were drawn around the core acreages and adjoining parcels were examined to see if they should be included. Adjoining parcels were only included if more than 50 percent of the parcel edge abutted the area. Anything 50 percent or less would have made it difficult to draw a line.

The Pierce County comprehensive plan allows for higher densities within the rural area in areas called rural centers.⁸ The plan provides for three types of rural centers:⁹

- Rural activity centers allow commercial and residential development at existing densities. Mixed-use, industrial, and commercial development must have adequate facilities (there should also be an infrastructure requirement for residential). There are locational criteria, such as proximity to other rural centers and access to state routes or major arterials.

- Rural neighborhood centers must have established limited commercial for convenience shopping and services, be located on a state route or major arterial, and be at least two miles from other rural centers. Residential development must be consistent with adjacent rural designations.
- Rural gateway community applies only to tourist uses in the Greenwater and Ashford/Elbe areas. These are gateway communities to Mount Rainier National Park. Rural gateway communities are only to be established through a community planning process.

(f) Analysis of criteria

Finally, the county must determine whether application of the criteria results in appropriately sized and located areas of more intense development. For instance, if application of the criteria results in areas of more intense development that encompass most of the rural area (for example, sprawl results because the exception has become the rule), the criteria will need to be revised. On analysis, the county may need to more narrowly define the criteria in order to meet the requirement that existing areas and uses be minimized and contained. The county will also need to review the criteria for compatibility with protection of the character of the surrounding rural area.

2. Other Innovative Techniques for Providing a Variety of Rural Densities and Protecting Rural Character

Counties may want to consider other techniques to provide for a variety of

rural densities. RCW 36.70A.070(5)(b) allows counties to “provide for clustering, density transfer, design guidelines, conservation easements, and other innovative techniques that will accommodate appropriate rural densities and uses that are not characterized by urban growth and are consistent with rural character.”

(a) Cluster development

Cluster development can be a useful tool for allowing rural development if it is done carefully and overall density remains low. Too much density in the rural area, even if it is clustered, can lead to sprawl and uses incompatible with rural character and adjacent land uses. A guidebook with provisions for rural clustering is being prepared by CTED.

Counties interested in allowing cluster development should consider the following:

- Minimum open space or resource land requirements.
- Permanent protection of open space, or reservation of a tract in open space that can later be developed only if added to a UGA and rezoned to an urban density in the future.
- Permanent protection of rural working farms and forests.
- Incentives such as density bonuses for meeting special conditions, for example, a high level of open space.
- Design guidelines to assure compatibility with rural character and minimize visual impact, for example, buffering from rural roads to ensure visual compatibility.
- Careful location to avoid checkerboard patterns and to preserve large areas of open space.

-
- Location away from resource lands or provision of adequate buffering between clusters and resource lands.
 - Limitations on use so clustering does not become the predominate pattern of development throughout the rural area.¹⁰ Provisions limiting the size and density to avoid the need for urban levels of service.
 - Ability to protect historic properties, historic landscapes, and archaeological sites, including the ability to apply historic preservation incentives to cluster development.

In Skagit County, when land divisions are proposed on lands in the rural area near the UGA, the comprehensive plan provides for Conservation and Reserve Developments (CaRDs).¹¹ CaRDs are encouraged within one mile of the UGA to provide for more flexible land development options within the potential future UGA, allowance of bonus development lots, conservation easements for natural resource lands and critical areas, transfer of development rights, current use taxation, and other innovative options. The comprehensive plan requires that a CaRD ordinance, development standards, and permitting procedures be established.

For more information on clustering and open space, see the following Growth Management Program publications: *Evaluating Innovative Techniques for Resource Lands, Part I: Clustering and Designation Your Community's Open Space: A Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Planning Guide.*

(b) Transfer/purchase of development rights

The county can provide for the transfer of development rights from one property to another if it has identified sending areas in rural and/or long-term commercial resource lands and receiving areas in the UGA or in designated rural villages or activity centers. The purchase of development interests in the land will retain the agricultural or resource value while limiting future development for other uses.

Thurston County has implemented a purchase of development rights program for the Nisqually Valley.¹² A program for the transfer of development rights has also been developed for the remaining designated agriculture lands in the county. As part of this program, receiving areas have been identified within in all of the cities and unincorporated UGAs within Thurston County.

King County has also been working on a transfer of development rights program. Potential receiving areas have been identified in the unincorporated UGA, rural areas that already have a development pattern of smaller lots, rural city UGAs, and rural towns. Using some of these areas, such as rural areas, would require an amendment to the county comprehensive plan to allow higher densities.

For more information on transfer of development rights, consult the Growth Management Program publication *Evaluating Innovative Techniques for Resource Lands, Part II: Transfer of Development Rights.*

(c) Design guidelines

Design guidelines, along with development standards and permit approval requirements for specific location and site requirements, can be used to retain rural character. Design guidelines in rural areas should consider historic design trends in the built environment and should specifically address issues surrounding the massing, form, materials, and color of new buildings or structures. The design elements of the rural built environment include traditional buildings such as barns, farmhouses, general stores, feed stores, and fruit stands. These forms will be based on the traditional lifestyles and culture of the county or area of the county.

In general, site design standards should include landscaped setbacks between buildings and the road, modest parking, and retention of existing mature vegetation. Development standards for lighting, circulation, parking, landscaping, and pedestrian walkways should be consistent with the rural area. For example, narrow roads, small parking lots, and prohibition of suburban cul-de-sacs are encouraged. Gravel parking lots and pedestrian paths may be more appropriate than paved parking lots and sidewalks.

In 1997, Snohomish County adopted design guidelines in its comprehensive plan for rural business zones, which include: retaining trees with a three-inch caliper or greater in required buffers; incorporating into site design existing native vegetation in the buildable area; limiting impervious surface to a 50 percent maximum; and limiting the size of buildings and adjacent parking.¹³

(d) Conservation easements

Conservation easements are an important tool for protecting open space. Provisions for conservation easements should clearly state how future development will be limited, who will hold title to the easement, how it will be managed and maintained, and how the limitations will be enforced and by whom. Conservation easements can be held by a homeowners association, a local land trust, or in public ownership.

CTED recommends that conservation easements be created in perpetuity to ensure protection of critical areas, wildlife habitat, and natural resource lands. However, if they are not to be created in perpetuity, the reasons and conditions for lifting the easement should be clearly stated. If they are created in anticipation for later inclusion in the UGA and infill, consideration should be given to the need to provide for subdivision at a later time and provision of services at urban densities (See discussion of Provision for Urban Reserve – Large Lots and Phased Development on page 21).

Similar to conservation easements, historic preservation easements may be applied to protecting historic properties, including not only buildings but also archaeological sites and open spaces with historic significance. This technique has been applied in places such as Ebey’s Landing Historic Reserve in Island County.

Notes

¹ See *Sky Valley v. Snohomish County*, CPSGMHB No. 95-3-0068c (September 8, 1998), page 10.

² Yakima County, *Yakima County Comprehensive Plan*, Policies LU-R 6 to 11.

³ Snohomish County, *Snohomish County GMA Comprehensive Plan*, Land Use Element, Policies 6.F.4 and 6.F.8(i).

⁴ Thurston County, *Thurston County Comprehensive Plan*, Land Use Element, III, Land Use Designations.

⁵ Snohomish County, *Snohomish County GMA Comprehensive Plan*, Land Use Element, Policy LU 6.F.7.

⁶ Whatcom County, *Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan*, Land Use – Rural Lands, pp. 2-59 to 2-82.

⁷ Thurston County, *Thurston County Zoning Ordinance*.

⁸ Pierce County, *Comprehensive Plan for Pierce County, Washington*, Rural Element, RUR Objective 6.

⁹ Pierce County will be providing for increased residential densities in these rural centers through community planning processes

(subarea plans). The county was challenged before the Central Puget Sound Growth Management Hearings Board on the location of these rural activity centers and the types of commercial development allowed. The hearings board found the county out of compliance on these issues, so the county revised the plan and was found in compliance.

¹⁰ See *Sky Valley v. Snohomish County*, CPSGMHB No. 95-3-0068c (September 8, 1998), page 10.

¹¹ Skagit County, *Skagit County Comprehensive Plan*, pp. 4-35 to 4-40.

¹² Thurston County, *Thurston County Zoning Ordinance*, Section 20.62.

¹³ Snohomish County, *Snohomish County GMA Comprehensive Plan*, Land Use Policies 6.F.3 and 6.F.8.

Land Use Options for Rural Economic Development

Counties often struggle to determine what economic development is appropriate in rural areas. The economic goal in the GMA is to encourage economic development throughout the state within the capacities of the state's natural resources, public services, and public facilities. Economic development is to be encouraged in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth. However, other GMA goals make clear that urban development should be in urban, not rural, areas and that sprawl should be reduced. Counties must balance economic development in rural areas with the need to protect rural character [RCW 36.70A.020(5)].

The majority of non-resource based economic development should occur within UGAs. In rural counties, development will be concentrated in rural cities, towns, and their unincorporated UGAs. However, counties can provide limited opportunities for economic development in addition to resource-based economic development in rural areas. These opportunities will be limited by the availability of infrastructure to support their development as well as the need to protect surrounding rural character.

Successful rural communities use tools, like comprehensive planning, to attract or retain the kind of business that makes sense for their area. Comprehensive plans lay out a strategy for how growth and development will occur over the next 20 years.

Another important tool is environmental analysis under the State Environmental

What does rural and rural economic development mean?

In this guidebook, rural economic development is discussed only as it applies to rural lands as defined under the GMA. Rural as defined in the Governor's Initiative and other programs may include entire rural counties including their cities and towns, remote rural areas, rural villages or hamlets, and resource lands. For example, the Governor's Rural Community Assistance Team uses the term rural natural resource impact areas and the term distressed county is used in a number of different statutes and state programs.

The GMA definition of rural tends to be narrower than in these programs and statutes. Rural lands under the GMA are those lands that are not incorporated or designated unincorporated urban growth areas and that have not been designated forest or agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance. Rural development as defined in the GMA will not include incorporated towns, but can consist of a variety of uses and residential densities, including unincorporated rural towns, villages, hamlets or activity centers [RCW 36.70A.030(15)].

So, when people talk about rural economic development in general, they usually are talking about more than just the rural lands as defined in the GMA. It is important to remember this distinction when reading through the following discussion of what may or may not be appropriate economic development in rural areas under the GMA.

Policy Act (SEPA). Adoption or amendment of the comprehensive plan or development regulations will require environmental review under SEPA. Environmental information is essential to good planning. It will be useful in the rural area to determine the impacts of proposed rural development on a county's ability to provide infrastructure to support the development and on the surrounding rural character.

For example, in delineating an area of more intense rural development, many counties may choose to develop a subarea plan for the area. Environmental analysis will provide important information for determining how dense development can be in these areas, what types of uses will be appropriate, and what public services may be needed to support the proposed development. Counties have the option of producing an integrated subarea plan and environmental impact statement (EIS) under the SEPA rules.

Another example where environmental review will be useful is in the development of zoning provisions for isolated small businesses. Environmental analysis will provide important information for determining the level or scale of business use appropriate to the rural area.

A number of land use options for economic development in rural areas were added to the GMA as part of ESB 6094. The range of options now available to counties and their communities include the following.

1. New Fully Contained Communities

A new fully contained community is a "development proposed for location outside of the initially designated urban growth areas which is characterized by urban densities, uses and services and meets the criteria of RCW 36.70A.350" [WAC 365-195-210(15)]. Counties that have insufficient land available in cities and towns or adjacent to cities and towns may want to consider creating new fully contained communities. The county must earmark a portion of its 20-year population projection for allocation to a new fully contained community and establish a process for reviewing proposals as part of its UGAs. A new community reserve may only be established every five years.

The GMA provides the following criteria which the county must meet before approving a development:

- New infrastructure is provided for and impact fees established;
- Transit-oriented site planning and traffic demand management programs are implemented;
- Buffers are provided between the new fully contained community and adjacent urban development;
- A mix of uses is provided to offer jobs, housing, and services to residents;
- Affordable housing is provided;
- Environmental protection has been addressed;
- Development regulations are established to prohibit adjacent urban growth;
- Impacts on resource lands are mitigated; and

-
- The plan is consistent with critical areas regulations.

No county has yet designated a fully contained community.

2. Master Planned Resorts

Master planned resorts are self-contained, fully integrated planned unit developments, in a setting of significant natural amenities, with primary focus on destination resort facilities (RCW 36.70A.360). They consist of short-term visitor accommodations associated with a range of developed on-site indoor or outdoor recreational facilities. A county may authorize a master planned resort only if: (1) the comprehensive plan specifically identifies policies to guide its development; (2) the comprehensive plan and development regulations preclude new urban or suburban land uses in the vicinity; and (3) the county finds that the land is more suitable for a master planned resort than for long-term commercial forestry or agriculture.

A master planned resort may include other residential uses within its boundaries but only if the residential uses are integrated into and support the on-site recreational nature of the resort. Capital facilities on-site must be limited to meeting the needs of the master planned resort. If facilities are provided by outside service providers, the resort must pay for all costs of service extensions and capacity directly attributable to the resort.

Because they are planned unit developments, local governments can require that the developer avoid strip development along roadsides. Successful destination resorts tend to

place a great premium on attractive design and amenities because these are key to attracting visitors. They also tend to be clustered developments, centered around open space structured for some use such as a golf course, ski resort, or national park. Tourism can provide a shot in the arm to the economies of surrounding communities by creating a need for supplemental accommodations, attractions, and services. However, in determining the appropriate size and scale of a master planned resort, attention should be paid to potential impacts to existing business in the area.

Only a few counties have adopted policies in their comprehensive plans to guide development of a master planned resort. No county has yet approved a master plan resort, although several proposals are currently pending. However, there are a few destination resorts that were approved prior to the GMA in the state that provide a good example of a master planned resort.

Clark County adopted comprehensive plan policies incorporating the GMA criteria and the following additional criteria for master planned resorts:¹

- The location, design, and provision of necessary utilities does not allow for the development of new urban or suburban land uses in the immediate vicinity;
- The proposed development provides urban services that are strictly contained within resort boundaries;
- The site is sufficient in size and configuration to provide for full resort facilities while maintaining adequate separation from adjacent rural or resource lands;

- The major recreational facilities are open to the public and the overall facilities promote tourism and the plan's recreational goals;
- Each proposal contains a full inventory of critical areas and cultural resources;
- Significant natural and cultural features are preserved and enhanced;
- Commercial uses and activities are located in the resort and limited to serving resort customers to minimize automobile trips for people using the facilities; and
- Adequate emergency services are available.

Whatcom County adopted policies in its plan for resort communities and master planned resorts.² These policies are designed to provide for the continued viability of existing resort areas, expansions of these areas, and new master planned resorts. The existing resort communities are Birch Bay, Point Roberts, Mount Baker winter recreational area, and Semiahmoo Spit. The policies include:

- Working with property owners to develop an understanding of the unique needs of the area and development regulations to address those needs;
- Providing sewer and water and mitigation of off-site impacts on infrastructure;
- Limiting residential uses to those that are integrated into and support the on-site recreational nature of the resort.

The Skamania Lodge Conference Center in the City of Stevenson provides a good example of some of the criteria that would be appropriate for a master

planned resort. Although Skamania County and the City of Stevenson are not fully planning under the GMA, land use is governed by the Management Plan for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.³ The Skamania Lodge is a good example because of the scale of the development and how it was integrated with the natural features of the site. Although the Lodge property is located within Stevenson, the area was zoned public recreational with destination resort as a conditional use. Stevenson is a small city with a population of 1,212.

The Skamania Lodge was developed within the natural constraints of the site, leaving as many trees as possible. It is screened from the highway and was sited to avoid interference with views of the Gorge. The city also required that it be sited on the edge of the city limits to reduce traffic impacts within the city. Traffic impacts were an important consideration because up to 6,000 trips can be generated by the Lodge on a weekend day. Finally, the development approval included a prohibition against big commercial operations on the site that would result in strip development or have an adverse impact on other businesses in Stevenson.

3. Small-scale Recreational or Tourist Uses

The intensification of development on lots containing, or new development of, small-scale recreational or tourist uses that rely on a rural location and setting are generally allowed in the rural area per RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)(ii). The recreational or tourist use can include commercial facilities, but not new residential development. Public services and facilities must be limited to those



River rafting is a small-scale recreational business that may be appropriate in rural areas.

Growth Strategies Commission

necessary to serve the use and provided in a manner that does not permit low-density sprawl. They need not be an existing use or be within a designated limited area of more intense rural development and need not be principally designed to serve the existing and projected rural population.

Examples of the intensification of development on lots containing small-scale recreational or tourist uses that depend on a rural location and setting might include:

- Adding a restaurant to an herb farm and nursery;
- Building a club house for a golf course, but no residences;
- Operating a bed and breakfast in a farmhouse; or
- Converting a barn into an antique shop.

Examples of new development of small-scale recreational or tourist uses that depend on a rural location and setting might include:

- Overnight camping facilities;
- Overnight accommodations (in addition to campgrounds) that are rural in scale, such as cabins and cottages;
- River access and associated activities, such as swimming, boating, windsurfing, fishing, and picnicking;
- Guided river rafting;
- Cross-country ski rentals in nearby foothills; and
- Commercial uses (such as restaurants) if they are part of the recreational or tourist use.

4. Intensification of Development on Existing Lots

Most counties have existing businesses located in the rural area that are isolated from other more intense development and so are not located in an area appropriate for designation as a rural village or rural activity center. In other words, the business is not located inside the logical outer boundary of a designated limited area of more intense

development within which infill, development, and redevelopment can occur. In attempting to meet the requirements of the GMA to not allow more intense development in rural areas, many counties designated these businesses as nonconforming uses. ESB 6094 was designed to allow counties to address the need of the rural community to retain and expand these businesses. Intensification of development on lots containing isolated nonresidential uses is now allowed under RCW 36.70A.070(5)(ii) and (iii).

Intensification, or expansion, of these businesses will be limited to the existing lot per the language of the GMA. Counties need to consider additional limitations to ensure that provision of public services and public facilities can be limited to those necessary to serve the business use without permitting sprawl.

Thurston County recently revised its comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance to recognize and address nonconforming commercial and industrial uses in the rural area. Staff conducted a field review of all tax parcels in the rural area that have a nonresidential land use code classification and that are zoned residential. Out of a total of 149 nonresidential uses in rural residential zones, 119 (80 percent) either had a special use permit or were grandfathered uses that would qualify for a special use permit.

The county found only 30 nonresidential uses (20 percent) that met the definition of nonconforming. Twenty-two of these uses had no land use permit and were assumed to have been established prior to the county's zoning code adoption.

The county said it had two options. One was to retain the existing 15 percent expansion limit for nonconforming uses for these 30 businesses. The other option was to take advantage of the GMA provision and rezone these uses to a rural commercial zone if they met certain criteria. Their criteria were:

- Existing commercial uses on the site were legally established on or before July 1, 1990;
- The majority of the site is already developed with uses that are permitted outright in the County's Neighborhood Commercial zone; and
- The site is located at an intersection and takes access from an arterial or collector road.

These criteria were incorporated into the Land Use Element of the Thurston County Comprehensive Plan.⁴ The zoning ordinance was also amended to include nonresidential use in the rural area as a special use with provisions for expansion as follows:⁵

- Expansion is limited to a maximum of fifty (50) percent of the existing building footprint, as of July 1, 1990, provided that all of the standards below are met.
- The expansion will occur on the same lot upon which the existing use is located.
- The expansion is visually compatible with the surrounding rural area.
- Detrimental impacts to adjacent properties will not be increased or intensified.
- The expansion does not result in a formerly small operation dominating the vicinity.

- The expansion will not constitute new urban development in the rural area.
- Public services and facilities are limited to those necessary to serve the isolated nonresidential use and are provided in a manner that does not permit low-density sprawl.
- The design standards of the underlying zoning district and all other applicable regulations are met.

5. Isolated Cottage Industries and Isolated Small-scale Businesses

New development of isolated cottage industries and isolated small-scale businesses may be generally allowed in the rural area under RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)(iii). They need not be an existing use or be within a designated limited area of more intense rural development. They need not be principally designed to serve the existing and projected rural population. But public facilities and services for these isolated nonresidential uses must be limited to those necessary to serve the use, and they must not permit low-density sprawl.

Cottage industry is defined in a number of local codes as business activities carried on in the principal residence, or within a permitted accessory structure, that is subordinate to the residential use of the property. The intent is to preserve the surrounding rural character for other rural residents. Cottage industry provisions may include the following:⁶

- A requirement that the business be owned by the full-time residents of the property;

- A requirement that the business be limited to in-home manufacturing and prohibiting retail sales on the site;
- A limit on the number of employees and/or a limit on the number of employees outside the owning family;
- A requirement that the use be compatible with or screened from the road and adjacent properties;
- A provision that the use not require urban level services;
- A limit on the percentage of interior space in the living area of the primary residence or a square footage limit;
- A limit on off-site impacts such as noise, smoke, dust, heat, light, and glare to that normally generated by a single-family residence;
- A limit on traffic generated and/or delivery trucks;
- Signage restrictions; and
- Minimum parcel size.

Isolated small-scale businesses are a less limited use than cottage industry. The following criteria or provisions may be used to define small-scale business:

- Location in an accessory structure that may not be subordinate to the residential use of the property but is still limited in size;
- Provision for manufacturing and/or retail sales;
- A provision that the use does not create a new commercial or industrial area;
- A slightly higher limit on the number of employees than cottage industry;
- Other restrictions mentioned above for cottage industry such as compatible use, limits on public service provision, limits on off-site

impacts and traffic, signage restrictions, and parcel size. Small-scale businesses and cottage industry can be important to the rural economy. However, as businesses grow larger they may soon begin to change the rural character of the area and reduce the quality of life for other property owners. As discussed above, it will be important to analyze the impacts of expanded uses in determining whether the expansion is appropriate in the rural area.

Size, scale, and level of activity

Overall, the limiting factors for small-scale recreational and tourist uses, isolated cottage industry, isolated small-scale businesses, and expansion of businesses on existing lots are the size and scale and the level of activity generated. In determining standards for these uses, the standards should be based upon an analysis of the impacts they will have on the surrounding rural area.

CTED is not recommending a standard number of employees or structural size for each type of use. As discussed above, environmental review of the types of uses for the impacts on public services and the natural environment will provide useful indicators for determining the level of use that will be allowed. For example, a certain level of use may not be appropriate for the rural area if it is of a size and scale that will require sewer service, if it generates more traffic than rural roads can handle, or if the amount of impervious surface created by a certain size structure impacts adjacent property owners or critical salmon habitat.

6. Major Industrial Developments Outside of Urban Growth Areas

Counties may establish a process for approval of a major industrial development outside of the UGA for a specific business. A major industrial development outside of the UGA is a “master planned location for a specific manufacturing, industrial, or commercial business” (RCW 36.70A.365). The process for approval must be established in consultation with cities. Major industrial developments must require a parcel of land so large that no suitable parcels are available within the UGA or must be a natural resource-based industry that requires a location near the resource lands on which it is dependent. Upon approval, the development will be designated as a UGA. At a minimum, a major industrial development must meet the following statutory criteria:

- New infrastructure is provided for and/or applicable impacts fees are paid;
- Transit-oriented site planning and traffic demand management programs are implemented;
- Buffers are provided between the major industrial development and adjacent non-urban areas;
- Environmental protection including air and water quality has been addressed and provided for;
- Development regulations are established to ensure that urban growth will not occur in adjacent nonurban areas;
- Provision is made to mitigate adverse impacts on designated agricultural lands, forest lands, and mineral resource lands;

-
- The plan for the major industrial development is consistent with the county's development regulations established for protection of critical areas; and
 - An inventory of developable land has been conducted and the county has determined and entered findings that land suitable to site the major industrial development is unavailable within the UGA. Priority shall be given to applications for sites that are adjacent to or in close proximity to the UGA.

No county has yet approved a major industrial development outside the UGA based on these requirements.

7. Industrial Land Banks for Counties That Meet Certain Conditions

In addition to major industrial developments, the GMA allows certain counties to designate industrial land banks outside of UGAs (RCW 36.70A.367). In 1996, the Legislature authorized Clark County to designate a bank of no more than two master planned locations for major industrial activity outside UGAs. In 1997, this authority was extended to Whatcom County. Authority was extended to Lewis, Grant, and Clallam counties in 1998.

Land banks may only be designated in an adopted comprehensive plan. The authority for a county to engage in the process of including or excluding master planned locations will terminate on December 31, 1999. The criteria for designating industrial land banks are the same as for major industrial developments in RCW 36.70A.365 (see

section 6 on page 40). However, in addition to developments for which there is no suitable land in the UGA and natural resource-based developments, developments requiring a location with characteristics such as proximity to transportation facilities or related industries are allowed. The major industrial development may not be for retail commercial development or multi-tenant office parks.

No county has yet established a process or approved an industrial land bank outside the UGA.

8. Agriculture

Agriculture is one of the central elements of economic development for rural counties and in the rural areas of more urban counties. Agriculture, from primary production to supporting industries, is by far the single largest source of jobs and economic activity in rural areas statewide and will remain so for the foreseeable future.⁷ In addition to primary production, supporting industries include food processing, transportation, farm implements, fertilizers, and computerized irrigation systems.

Washington agriculture is a multi-billion dollar sector of the state's economy and Washington's leading employer. Washington continues to be a leader in many areas of agricultural production. Agriculture represents \$29 billion of Washington's \$145 billion economy. Washington farmers produce \$5.8 billion worth of agricultural products annually.

Agriculture is a major employer in rural areas. For example, in Franklin and Benton counties, the processing industry

alone employs 3,000 workers with a \$71.5 million payroll annually. The GMA requires counties to designate and conserve agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance. A number of counties have designated both agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance and rural agricultural lands. Both are important to the rural economy. Even if agricultural land does not meet the criteria for long-term commercial, smaller farms can be an important source of income for rural residents. Rural farms bring fresh produce to farmers' markets in nearby cities and towns, operate u-pick farms and roadside stands, and grow specialty crops.

Western Washington, farms average less than 100 acres in size but produce most of the state's berries, Christmas trees, green peas, milk, eggs, and seafood. Irrigated croplands in sunny Eastern Washington include orchards, vineyards, and vegetable farms that are less than 50 acres in size and farms of 500 acres or more that harvest potatoes, hay, corn, and wheat. More than 50 percent of the state's farms are small, part-time operations – less than 50 acres in size and with sales of less than \$10,000. All this makes Washington, along with Florida and California, one of the leading minor crop states.

A number of rural communities have



Washington State Apple Advertising Commission

Agriculture is important to the economy for many counties.

Productive farms vary in size throughout the state. With the temperate weather in

profited by recognizing the potential for nontraditional specialty crops. The

market for very fresh foods, organically-grown and/or low-calorie, high nutrition produce is expanding. This more intensive form of farming can be workable on acreages as small as 20 acres. Some operations can be supported on 10 acres if the operator has a second source of income. Berry farms,

commercial significance. However, counties should also consider conservation of those smaller farms that provide jobs and contribute to the economy in the rural area. Current use taxation, transfer or purchase of development rights, clustering, and other programs can provide incentives for



The Wenatchee Farmers Market offers local growers with small acreages the opportunity to sell produce directly to consumers.

Rita R. Robison

nurseries, flower bulbs, floral greenery or tree farms, and specialty lettuce farms have done well in counties with large urban centers such as King and Snohomish. Vineyards have also flourished in some areas of the state which would not support more traditional crops.

Despite agriculture's economic significance to the state's economy, there are many land use trends affecting the industry's future. The trend toward sprawling residential development in rural areas has resulted in the loss of prime agricultural lands.⁸

Counties planning under the GMA are required to designate and conserve agricultural lands of long-term

farmers to keep their land in agricultural production. Thurston County has begun purchasing development rights from farmers in the Nisqually Valley.

9. Forestry

Forestry remains a leading industry in the Washington state economy. Forest products in Washington state are the second largest manufacturing industry after transportation (primarily aircraft). In 1995, forest products direct gross income for lumber and wood products, paper and allied products, and private forestry was \$12.5 billion. The forest products industry directly employed 54,536 people. Based upon a 1994 economic impact study that estimated each forest products job indirectly

supports 2.64 additional jobs, forestry indirectly supported employment of 144,000 people. The Department of Natural Resource's timber sales revenues for school construction in 1996 was \$91.2 million.^{9,10}

As with farms, productive forest land tracts vary in size throughout the state. Some counties have designated rural forest lands in addition to forest lands of long-term commercial significance. These designations recognize the importance of small forest holdings in the rural area for timber production and protection of wildlife habitat. Small private forest lands are often located in fertile lowlands with high site potential,

15 percent of the forest land base, while private industrial forest landowners account for 22 percent. In 1996, the forest industry harvested 2,017,921 board feet, while NIPFs harvested 1,255,785. Comparing this to an industrial harvest of 2,771,218 and NIPF harvest of 819,705 in 1965, the trend in the forest industry is toward a larger percentage of NIPFs harvest.¹¹

Although the public tends to view forest lands and the forest industry as most important and in the most need of conservation in rural counties, the three fastest growing counties in the decade from 1987 to 1997 were also high in timber production. In that decade, King

Effective rural planning can help small non-industrial forest landowners remain in production in rural areas.



Washington Forest Protection Association

important water channels and streams, and increasing development pressure. Although most nonindustrial forest lands have probably been designated rural forest or rural residential (instead of forest lands of long-term commercial significance), they can still be suitable for timber production.

Non-industrial private forest landowners (NIPFs) with small forest holdings own

County was number six in timber production on private lands, Pierce County was number eight, and Snohomish County was number 10.¹² Forestry is an important part of the economy for both rural and urban counties.

In 1992, King County had 138,000 acres of small private forests; Pierce County had 156,000 acres; and Snohomish

County had 152,000.¹³ Given the increasing pressures of growth in these and other counties around the state, it becomes even more important to provide for timber, habitat, and water quality. To ensure conservation of forest lands, counties need to consider strategies in their comprehensive plans to encourage continued timber ownership and production in rural areas as well as in forest lands of long-term commercial significance. Strategies to conserve rural forests should include lower rural residential densities but can also include innovative land use techniques. Such techniques could include current use taxation, transfer of development rights, clustering, and other techniques discussed in this guidance.

Landowners should also be advised of the opportunity to work with the Department of Natural Resources to develop management plans for their forests. Two small forest landowners have written management plans for their

commercial and half is zoned rural (10-acre zoning). He receives revenue from his land but also enjoys it as a special place for him and his family. The other family of landowners own several tracts of forest land zoned rural in Cowlitz County (five acre zoning). They manage the land intensively for forestry, doing annual harvesting, thinning, and vegetation control. Each of these owners is able to generate income from their land while protecting important habitat, water quality, and rural character.¹⁴

10. Natural Resource-based Industry

A natural resource-based industry is one that is dependent on an agricultural, forest, fishing, mining, or other natural resource of the local area. Examples include wineries, lumber mills, and many kinds of food processing operations. Natural resource-based industry is appropriate and allowed in

Food processing industries, such as wineries, provide opportunities for jobs in rural areas.



Heather Ballash

land in response to changing forest practices regulations. One is a small orchardist in Clark County who owns several hundred acres of forest land, of which half is zoned long-term

rural areas.¹⁵ Agriculture and forestry provide the economic base for a number of rural counties.

Perhaps the most important opportunity for permanent job and revenue creation is in value-added products, for example, food processing. Food processing is a \$7.7 billion industry. Diversification to include these industries has allowed some communities to better survive the ups and downs of today's markets. For example, a number of farmers in the Yakima Valley and Tri-Cities area are now growing grapes and producing wine. The Washington wine industry has developed into a well-respected and recognized producer of quality wines. Washington ranks second in the country in premium wine production behind California. There are now more than 100 wineries and more than 21,000 acres planted in wine grapes in the state.

Even though natural resource-based industry is appropriate and allowed in rural areas, there may still be issues of infrastructure that need to be addressed. For example, food processing operations often require substantial amounts of water. Water rights may be an issue that needs to be resolved before a natural resource-based industry can locate. Adequate roads or the proximity of rail may also be an issue if the industrial use involves shipping raw or finished products in and out of the facility.

Snohomish County adopted a land use policy which promotes resource-based industries that help sustain rural communities, require only rural levels of service, support the conservation of natural resource lands, and complement rural.¹⁶

11. Limited Areas of More Intense Development

Limited areas of more intense development are areas where infill development, expansion, or redevelopment of existing commercial and industrial uses can occur. Opportunities for rural economic development can be provided in rural areas of more intense development. Infill, development, or redevelopment may be allowed in designated areas where there are existing commercial, industrial, or mixed uses. These areas must be minimized and delineated by a logical outer boundary under RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)(iv). (See also discussion in Optional Tools: Limited Areas of More Intense Development starting on page 23).

(a) Commercial

Rural activity centers, villages, hamlets, or crossroads developments are examples of rural areas of more intense development where limited commercial or industrial development may occur. The county may provide for businesses within these areas to expand. New commercial businesses can locate on undeveloped land within the logical outer boundary if they are compatible with the existing community, can be served by public facilities without promoting sprawl, and are principally designed to serve the surrounding rural area.

Pierce County's rural activity centers allow commercial and residential development at existing densities.¹⁷ Mixed-use, industrial, and commercial development must have adequate facilities (there should also be an infrastructure requirement for residential). The county provisions for rural neighborhood centers require

established limited commercial for convenience shopping and services and location on a state route or major arterial.

Prior to the 1997 amendments to the GMA under ESHB 6094, Snohomish County adopted county-wide planning policies to limit commercial development in the rural area. The policy requires strict guidelines to limit commercial development outside of UGAs but allows retailing and wholesaling of agricultural products raised on nearby farms.¹⁸ The policy recognizes that most of the retail shopping needs of rural residents will be met by commercial development within established UGAs such as nearby rural towns and cities. Limited convenience

allowed to serve the daily needs of rural residents.

The Snohomish County comprehensive plan further provides for rural business zones. The county is now in the process of adopting zoning amendments to implement county-wide planning policies and comprehensive plan policies for rural business zones by recognizing existing, small-scale commercial uses.

(b) Industrial

Industrial development within rural areas of more intense development can contribute to the economic diversity of unincorporated areas of the county and provide employment opportunities for the nearby rural population. Any



Rita R. Robison

Businesses in rural centers can expand to meet the needs of surrounding rural areas.

commercial development will be

industrial development, other than

natural resource-based industry, must be limited to infill, development, or redevelopment of existing industrial uses in areas that have been delineated for more intense rural development. However, these industrial uses are not required to be principally designed to serve the existing and projected rural population (RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)(I)).

Industrial uses should be based on existing uses, be compatible with the existing community, and be capable of being served by public facilities without promoting sprawl. Ordinance provisions should minimize disruption to adjacent rural residential areas created by noise, dust, odors, operating hours, vehicular movement and traffic, or adverse visual alteration of the natural landscape.

Industrial development appropriate to rural activity centers might include light industry such as warehousing, shipping and receiving, or minor assembly operations that currently exist in the rural area. Examples of existing assembly or manufacturing operations that could be expanded within a rural activity center without substantially increasing the need for public facilities include a fish and recreational net manufacturing facility (not natural resource-based because the nets are made out of nylon) or a manufacturer of exercise equipment. Old manufacturing sites can be used for other industries, for example, distribution warehouses where adequate transportation such as a rail line is already available.

Notes

¹ *Clark County County-wide Planning Policies*, Rural Lands Policy 4.1.4.

² Whatcom County, *Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan*, Goal 2B and Policies.

³ Columbia River Gorge Commission, *Management Plan for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area*, pp. 5, 7, 12, I-151, III-5, III-70, IV-22.

⁴ Thurston County, *Thurston County Comprehensive Plan*, Land Use Element, Rural Land Use and Activity Policy 5.

⁵ Thurston County, *Thurston County Code*, 20.54.070(23.5).

⁶ See Jefferson County Code 18.70.010 Definition – Categories; Pierce County Code 19A.40.010 Land Uses Generally; King County Code 21.04.260 Cottage Industry and 21.21A050 Permitted Uses – Conditional; and Whatcom County Codes 20.97.087 Cottage Industry, 20.34.150 Conditional Uses, and 20.36.150 Conditional Uses.

⁷ This statement refers to rural areas on a statewide level. However, it may not be true for rural areas in every county. CTED notes that this statement may not apply to some counties that have very few or no designated agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance.

⁸ Between 1982 and 1996, Washington lost some 59,747 acres in farmland (Washington Agricultural Statistics 1995-1996 *Annual Statistical Report*, Table 1, Land in Farms).

⁹ Richard S. Conway Jr., *The Forest Products Economic Impact Study: Current Conditions and Issues* (Seattle: n.p., 1994), p. vii.

¹⁰ Jerry Korst, *Forest Facts and Figures*, ed. Mike Munson (Olympia: n.p., 1997), p. 6.

¹¹ Ann Johnson, "The Importance and Differences in Non-Industrial Private Forest Landowners," *Western Forester*, (Olympia: Washington Department of Natural Resources, October 1997), p. 1.

¹² *Western Forester*, p. 1.

¹³ *Western Forester*, p. 1.

¹⁴ *Western Forester*, p. 4.

¹⁵ *Abenroth v. Skagit County*, WWGMHB No. 97-2-0060c (Final Decision and Order, January 23, 1998) and *Salnick, et al. v. Spokane County*, EWGMHB No. 97-1-0020 (Final Decision and Order, March 25, 1998).

¹⁶ Snohomish County, *Snohomish County GMA Comprehensive Plan*, Land Use Policy 6.B.3.

¹⁷ Pierce County, *Comprehensive Plan for Pierce County, Washington*, Land Use Element, RUR Objective 6.

¹⁸ Snohomish County, *Snohomish County County-wide Planning Policies*, Policy RU-5.

Conclusion

Planning is an ongoing process. Regardless of whether a county has adopted or is in the process of adopting its comprehensive plan, issues of rural development will continue to arise as growth occurs both inside and outside the urban growth boundary. Counties will need to monitor development to determine whether the assumptions of projected population growth are consistent with what is actually occurring in urban and rural areas.

Counties and rural communities will be most successful if they first establish a

clear vision of what is most important to them. That vision will guide how rural character is defined and protected.

Counties need to continue to be flexible and creative in how they reconcile existing development patterns and provide for future development in the rural area. They must balance the needs of rural residents with protection of those parts of the rural environment that contribute to every citizen's quality of life and economic and physical well-being.



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Counties need to monitor development to ensure that adopted policies and regulations actually protect rural character.

Definitions

Critical Areas: "Critical areas" include the following areas and ecosystems: (a) Wetlands; (b) areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water; (c) fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas; (d) frequently flooded areas; and (e) geologically hazardous areas. RCW 36.70A.030(5)

Historic property: A historic element of the built environment that may be a district, site, building, structure, or object significant in American history, architecture, engineering, archaeology, and culture. A historic property may be an entire farm such as the Christian Schmidt Farm in Douglas County, a historic agricultural landscape such as Ebey's Landing Historic Reserve in Coupeville, grange halls, grist mills, bridges, trails, or the archaeological remains of a prehistoric Native American village. It may be of value to the nation, the state, or important only to the community in which it is located.

Historic properties do not necessarily follow parcel lines or boundary lines on a map. For example, a historic rural landscape or archaeological site usually crosses boundaries and encompasses several jurisdictions and parcels.

Limited areas of more intense rural development: Limited areas of more intensive rural development is rural development consisting of the infill, development, or redevelopment of existing commercial, industrial, residential, or mixed-use areas, whether

characterized as shoreline development, villages, hamlets, rural activity centers, or crossroads developments. See RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d) and discussion under Optional Tools for More Intense Development on page 23 for a more complete definition.

Rural character: "Rural character" refers to the patterns of land use and development established by a county in the rural element of its comprehensive plan:

- (a) In which open space, the natural landscape, and vegetation predominate over the built environment;
- (b) That foster traditional rural lifestyles, rural-based economies, and opportunities to both live and work in rural areas;
- (c) That provide visual landscapes that are traditionally found in rural areas and communities;
- (d) That are compatible with the use of the land by wildlife and for fish and wildlife habitat;
- (e) That reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development;
- (f) That generally do not require the extension of urban governmental services; and
- (g) That are consistent with the protection of natural surface water flows and ground water and surface water recharge and discharge areas. RCW 36.70A.030(14)

Rural development: "Rural development" refers to development outside the urban growth area and outside agricultural, forest, and mineral resource lands designated pursuant to RCW 36.70A.170. Rural development can consist of a variety of uses and residential densities, including clustered residential development, at levels that are consistent with the preservation of rural character and the requirements of the rural element. Rural development does not refer to agriculture or forestry activities that may be conducted in rural areas. RCW 36.70A.030(15)

Rural services: "Rural governmental services" or "rural services" include those public services and public facilities historically and typically delivered at an intensity usually found in rural areas, and may include domestic water systems, fire and police protection services, transportation and public transit services, and other public utilities associated with rural development and normally not associated with urban areas. Rural services do not include storm or sanitary sewers, except as otherwise authorized by RCW 36.70A.110(4). RCW 36.70A.030(16)

Urban growth: "Urban growth" refers to growth that makes intensive use of land for the location of buildings, structures, and impermeable surfaces to such a degree as to be incompatible with the primary use of land for the production of food, other agricultural products, or fiber, or the extraction of mineral resources, rural uses, rural development, and natural resource lands designated pursuant to RCW 36.70A.170. A pattern of more intensive rural development, as provided in RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d), is not urban growth.

When allowed to spread over wide areas, urban growth typically requires urban governmental services. "Characterized by urban growth" refers to land having urban growth located on it, or to land located in relationship to an area with urban growth on it as to be appropriate for urban growth. RCW 36.70A.030(17)

Urban growth areas: "Urban growth areas" means those areas designated by a county pursuant to RCW 36.70A.110. RCW 36.70A.030(18)

Urban services: "Urban governmental services" or "urban services" include those public services and public facilities at an intensity historically and typically provided in cities, specifically including storm and sanitary sewer systems, domestic water systems, street cleaning services, fire and police protection services, public transit services, and other public utilities associated with urban areas and normally not associated with rural areas. RCW 36.70A.030(19)

Wetlands: "Wetland" or "wetlands" means areas that are inundated or saturated by surface water or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas. Wetlands do not include those artificial wetlands intentionally created from nonwetland sites, including, but not limited to, irrigation and drainage ditches, grass-lined swales, canals, detention facilities, wastewater treatment facilities, farm ponds, and landscape amenities, or those wetlands created after July 1, 1990, that were

unintentionally created as a result of the construction of a road, street, or highway. Wetlands may include those artificial wetlands intentionally created

from nonwetland areas created to mitigate conversion of wetlands. RCW 36.70A.030(20)

Appendix B

County-wide Planning Policies and Other Existing Information

County-wide planning policies provide the framework for county and city comprehensive plans. They should be reviewed for their guidance for protection of rural lands and rural development. The policies need to address issues of importance throughout the county, including capital facilities, transportation facilities and strategies, and economic development and employment. Statewide capital facilities and essential public facilities need to be discussed. The policies should also include provisions for population allocation (see Appendix C), rural capital facilities, and rural residential development.

Other sources of information that can provide policy guidance and useful information include subarea plans, watershed studies or plans, and other functional plans that apply to the rural area.

King County's county-wide planning policies acknowledge that rural areas provide an overall benefit for all county residents and that towns and cities in the rural area play an important role as local trade and community centers. Policy LU-9 requires the Growth Management Planning Council to develop a recommendation on the definition of rural character and incentives for protection of rural areas. Incentives to be considered include:

- Assess land in rural areas on its current use;

- Facilitate small landowners qualifying their land for special categories such as forest, wetlands, riparian zones;
- Develop programs for direct marketing of produce in urban areas;
- Reinforce right to farm and forest practices in rural areas; and/or
- Develop services through existing agencies with rural expertise.

King County Policy LU-12 requires clustering of new development on all existing parcels of contiguous ownership of 10 or more acres, provided that clustering is designed and scaled to be consistent with rural area character.

Snohomish County's county-wide planning policies for rural land use include:

- Establishing level of service standards for rural development.
- Establishing rural density and development standards based on accommodating the portion of the 20-year growth not accommodated within urban growth areas.
- Establishing rural infrastructure standards that are consistent with appropriate rural development patterns and densities.
- Permitting rural clustering as a tool to preserve open space.
- Establishing strict guidelines to limit commercial development outside of UGAs. Most of the retail shopping needs of rural residents will be met by commercial development within

established UGAs such as nearby rural towns and cities and should not be expected to be provided for in rural areas.

- Establishing guidelines to limit industrial development outside of UGAs.

Appendix C

Land Use Capacity Analysis/population Allocated to the Rural Area

Counties are encouraged to allocate population to the rural area as part of the population allocation process for the entire county. For direction on how to allocate population to rural areas, counties should look to the GMA. Local county-wide planning policies, comprehensive plan vision statements and policies, and land capacity analyses may supplement this.

The GMA directs the Office of Financial Management (OFM) to prepare population projections in consultation with counties (RCW 43.62.035). Each projection is to be expressed as a reasonable range within the standard state high and low projection. The middle range represents OFM's estimate of the most likely population projection for the county. The GMA also states that comprehensive plans adopted or amended before December 31, 1995, shall not be considered to be in noncompliance with the 20-year growth management projection if the projection used for the comprehensive plan is in compliance with the range later adopted under this section.

OFM's population projections should be the basis for a county's entire comprehensive plan, including the rural areas. Counties need to: (1) use OFM's population projections to determine urban growth areas with land and densities sufficient to accommodate that portion of the county's population they expect to be urban; and (2) develop criteria for designating UGAs (RCW

36.70A.110). Counties should also identify the amount of the projected population within the 20-year planning period which will live or work on rural lands [WAC 365-195-330(2)(b)]. The majority of growth should go into urban areas. Finally, counties are required to designate and conserve resource lands (forest, agricultural, and mineral) of long-term commercial significance and to protect critical areas (wetlands, geologically hazardous areas, aquifer recharge areas, frequently flooded areas, and fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas). (RCW 36.70A.060)

Taking this direction from the GMA, a logical process for allocating population to the rural area might be the following:

- Designate and conserve resource areas of long-term commercial significance. These areas and any required buffers would be removed from the consideration for both urban growth and rural growth.
- Designate and protect critical areas. A good reason to do this step before designating UGAs is that jurisdictions might want to leave significant or extensive critical areas out of UGAs.
- Determine the need and capacity for urban growth areas, where most of the county's growth should occur.
- Designate urban growth areas.
- Determine what land is appropriate for rural designation.
- Determine what the capacity is in the rural areas based on proposed land

use designations, including open space designations and areas of more intense rural development such as rural villages or activity centers. (See discussion of Limited Areas of More Intense Development on page 23).

- Analyze capacity in regard to OFM's population allocation for the county.
- Adjust rural or urban growth area land use designations or urban growth boundaries to fit OFM's population projections.

While the GMA does not require that rural capacity match rural population allocations, rural capacity should be taken into consideration in designating rural densities. Counties must try to avoid creating so much opportunity for growth in the rural area that the goal of encouraging growth in urban areas is undermined. This can be an especially tough challenge where a number of lots have already vested in the rural area.

Counties should note that determining a rural area's land capacity to accommodate the projected population does not include the use of a market factor. The use of a market factor is discussed as it relates to urban growth areas in the Growth Management Program's publication *Issues in Designating Urban Growth Areas, Part I; Providing Adequate Land Supply*. A market factor is appropriate for urban growth areas because growth is to be encouraged in urban areas under the GMA. Because the GMA does not encourage growth in rural areas, an adequate land supply is not an issue in these areas. Developable land in rural areas should be provided only in response to actual need or, in the case of limited areas of more intense

development, be provided based upon the existing built environment. Although industrial areas and small-scale recreational or tourists uses are not required to be principally designed to serve the existing and projected rural population, these designations are limited by other requirements in RCW 36.70A.070. (See discussion of Land Use Options for Rural Economic Development on page 33).

The Clark County Comprehensive Plan's Rural and Natural Resource Element states: "The allocation for the rural area is approximately 15,000 people over the next 20 years, which would account for approximately 12 percent of the total county population" (page 4-10).

Snohomish County County-wide Planning Policy UG 3 directs the county to "ensure that the final population allocation for UGA's reverses the current trend of increasing share of the county's population in rural areas." The county implemented this policy in its comprehensive plan with a complete section on Population and Employment that gives direction on how population should be distributed. Some of the most pertinent goals, policies, and objectives in this section of the plan are the following:

Goal PE 1: Establish a subcounty allocation of projected population growth to the year 2012 for unincorporated areas that is consistent with the goals of the Growth Management Act and the county-wide policies.

- Objective PE 1.A: Direct future growth in unincorporated Snohomish County into urban growth areas.

- Policy 1.A.1: Snohomish County's portion of the urban growth areas shall receive the majority of the unincorporated county's projected population and employment growth.
- Objective PE 1.B: Reduce future growth rates in rural areas of the county. (*Note: This objective is repeated in the Land Use Element's section on rural policies.*)
 - Policy 1.B.1: The rural population and employment growth targets of Appendix D and any future target amendments shall represent a reduction of the amount of rural growth presently occurring.
 - Policy 1.B.2: The rural growth targets and any future target modifications shall result in a reduction in the share of total county population and employment in rural areas over the next 20 years.

Skagit County's county-wide planning policy 1.2 provides: "Cities and towns

and their urban growth areas, and non-municipal urban growth areas designated pursuant to CPP 1.1, shall include areas and densities sufficient to accommodate as a target 80 percent of the county's 20 year population projection."

For more information on population allocation, designating urban growth areas, and appropriate densities for urban and rural areas, consult the following Growth Management Program publications:

- *Defining Rural Character and Planning for Rural Lands: A Rural Element Guide;*
- *Issues in Designating Urban Growth Areas, Part I: Providing Adequate Land Supply;*
- *Art and Science of Designating Urban Growth Areas, Part II: Suggestions for Criteria and Density;*
- *Shaping Your Future: A Guide to Designating Urban Growth Areas; and*
- *Predicting Growth and Change in Your Community: A Guide to Subcounty Forecasting.*

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Note: Dates indicated for comprehensive plans are the year the initial plans were adopted under the GMA. Readers should note that some references to plans may be included in subsequent amendments to those plans.