

# CHAPTER 3

## RURAL AREA AND NATURAL RESOURCE LANDS

Rural King County is an essential part of the county's rich diversity of lifestyle choices and landscapes in a backdrop of scenic natural beauty. This chapter sets forth the county's intent and policies to ensure the conservation and enhancement of rural communities and resource lands. This chapter addresses the Rural Area, which comprises the land use classifications of Rural Area, Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers, and Rural Towns. It also addresses the designated Resource Lands, which include lands designated Agriculture, Forest, or Mining on the Land Use Map.

### Growth Management Act's Goals, Elements, and Requirements

Sections I through V of this chapter satisfy the Growth Management Act's (GMA) mandatory rural element by designating rural lands in order to limit development and prevent sprawl, by permitting land uses that are compatible with the rural character established in the King County Countywide Planning Policies, and by providing for a variety of rural densities. These sections also satisfy the mandatory land use element by indicating the population densities that are appropriate for the Rural Area land use classification. The policies in these sections also encourage natural resource-based industries and natural resource land uses in the Rural Area as required by the GMA.

Section VI of this chapter satisfies GMA Goal 8 to maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries; RCW 36.70A.170 requirement to designate natural resource lands; and RCW 36.70A.080 optional conservation element by conserving natural resource lands.

### Rural ((Legacy)) Area and Communities

Understanding and conserving the unique characteristics of the Rural Area and each of the county's distinct rural communities will help the county retain its rural character and its agricultural, ~~((and~~ forestry, and mining heritage.

King County's Rural Area, including communities such as the Hobart Plateau, Vashon Island, the Snoqualmie Valley, and the Enumclaw Plateau, are characterized by low-density residential development, farms, ranches, forests, watersheds crucial for both fisheries and flood hazard management, mining areas, small cities and towns, historic sites and buildings, archaeological sites, and regionally important recreation areas. These rural uses ~~((and activities interact with the county's rich agricultural and forestry resources))~~ complement and support the more extensive resource uses in the designated Resource Lands. The location of the Rural Area between the Urban Growth Area and the designated Resource Lands helps to protect commercial agriculture and timber from incompatible uses.

Designation and conservation of ~~((a))~~ the Rural Area supports and sustains rural communities and rural character as valued parts of King County's diversity. It also provides choices in living environments; maintains a link to King County's heritage; allows farming, livestock uses, and forestry to continue; and helps protect environmental quality and sensitive resources, such as groundwater recharge areas and watersheds crucial for both fisheries and flood hazard management. Rural King County also acts to enhance urban areas by providing a safe and reliable local food source, nearby open space and parks for a variety of recreation and tourism opportunities, and educational opportunities to explore current and historic agricultural and forestry practices.

Within the Rural Area are lands designated as Rural Towns and Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers. The purpose of these designations is to provide services and limited goods that satisfy rural residents' and businesses' daily needs.

## **Resource Lands ~~((in King County))~~**

The growing, harvest, extraction, processing, and use of products from the land play an important role in King County's economy by providing jobs and products for local use and export. Agricultural and forest lands also provide scenic views, links to King County's cultural heritage, and environmental benefits such as wildlife habitat, improvements in air and water quality, and carbon sequestration. In large measure, King County's quality of life is dependent upon the thoughtful planning and sound management of these lands to ensure their long-term conservation and productive use.

The population growth in the Puget Sound Region since 1945 has resulted in the conversion of agricultural and forest lands to other uses, and the reduction of mining opportunities. The natural resource land base has diminished for many reasons, among them the demand for more land for urban land uses, fragmentation of large acreages into rural residential properties, loss of infrastructure such as local processing facilities for resource-based industries, and the high cost of land. Since 1994, when King County designated its resource lands of long term significance under GMA, it has been much more successful in retaining these areas.

Section VI contains King County's strategy for conservation of these valuable resource lands and for encouraging their productive and sustainable management. The strategy consists of policies to guide planning, incentives, education, and regulation. Although Section VI focuses on the designated resource lands of long term commercial significance, many of the policies are applicable to farm, forest and mineral lands in the Rural Area as well.

# **I. Rural ((Legacy and Communities)) Area**

Preserving rural King County plays a key role in ensuring a continuing variety of landscapes, maintaining the diverse communities that often portray the rural legacy, and supporting the evolving rural economic opportunities for the county and its residents. The rural landscape is characterized by extensive forests and farm lands, free-flowing rivers and streams that provide high-quality habitat for fish and wildlife, and a mixture of housing types along with small commercial enterprises and business hubs. Rural lands and rural-based economies contribute to the range of choices and enhance the quality of life of all county residents. The Growth Management Act ((requires)) and the King County Strategic Plan envision different landscapes, infrastructure, and level of services for urban and rural communities. King County is committed to (~~protect these areas while~~) sustaining traditional rural lifestyles, rural economic clusters, and rural character.

Traditional rural economic activities have evolved over the decades as residents have responded to changing markets and the expansion of urban areas. Large-scale, commercial forestry and mining have been and continue to be the traditional land uses in the eastern half of King County. Farming continues in the prime soils found in the river valleys and on the Enumclaw Plateau. Although historic activities such as hop farming have disappeared, and the number of dairy farms has declined, today's farmers are exploring new crops, ~~((as well as opportunities))~~ value-added products, and creative direct marketing. County residents raise livestock such as poultry, cattle, sheep, llamas, alpacas, and buffalo. ~~((A broad range of equestrian uses are also a))~~ Equestrian activities, including breeding, training, boarding and recreation, have become a more significant part of the rural economy. The types of businesses now locating in the Rural Towns ((;)) and Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers ((;)) and being developed as home-based businesses have also responded to these changes in the county, and in the commercial market place.

The glacial soils and terrain that give King County its natural beauty also create significant environmentally critical areas, such as steep, erodable slopes, wetlands and groundwater recharge areas. Maintenance of tree cover, natural vegetation and wetlands are critical to the continued functioning of the ecosystem and preservation of rural character. The interplay of forest cover, soils and

water are essential to watershed health, ensuring adequate unpolluted groundwater recharge, surface water runoff and pollution reduction, carbon sequestration and habitat functions.

Conserving rural and natural resource lands in King County is integral to providing diversity in lifestyle choices; sustaining farming, livestock, and forestry economies; protecting environmental quality and wildlife habitat; and maintaining a link to the county's resource-based heritage.

## **A. Rural Legacy and Communities**

King County's rural legacy is found in the rich history of our rural communities and continues today in the preservation of ~~((bound to its))~~ the county's historic, cultural, ecological, and archaeological sites, and to its rich and varied forestry, agricultural, and mining heritage. The railroad played a significant role in the historic growth and development of the county; its legacy is still seen in tourism opportunities in the Rural ~~((e))~~ Cities of Skykomish and Snoqualmie. Historic barns are found throughout the agricultural areas of the county. Lumber mills influenced the development of communities, such as the Rural Commercial Neighborhood Center of Preston, where the mill site is still in existence and historic photos adorn the walls of the community center. Chapter Six of this plan provides the direction and policies for preserving the county's rural heritage. The policies that relate to conserving the farms and forests in King County are discussed in sections II and VI of this chapter.

**R-101      King County will continue to preserve and sustain its rural legacy and communities through programs and partnerships that ~~((by))~~ support~~((ing))~~, preserve, and sustain its historic, cultural, ecological, agriculture, forestry, and mining heritage; including but not limited to ~~((through collaboration with))~~ the King County Landmarks Commission, 4Culture, local and regional preservation and heritage programs, and other interested stakeholders. ~~((unincorporated area councils, community organizations, rural residents, and rural business owners, including forest and farm owners, and rural communities, towns, and cities)).~~**

## **B. Rural Character**

The GMA requires the protection of traditional rural activities and rural character. King County is committed to protecting rural character and recognizes that each of its rural communities has distinct and unique characteristics. These communities vary depending on settlement and economic history, geography, and distance from the urbanizing areas of the region. For example, residents of Vashon Island, accessible only by ferry, enjoy an island's leisurely and scenic lifestyle. Residents of the hilly gorge region around Black Diamond enjoy numerous recreational opportunities. There are small communities throughout rural King County, such as Hobart and Cumberland, each with their own unique history and lifestyle. Other rural communities, such as Old Maple Valley, are in transition as development of land in and adjacent to the areas is occurring. In the Snoqualmie Valley, farming is still the mainstay, while further east, the Town of Skykomish has a significant railroad and forestry history.

The growth in the Puget Sound region affects rural character everywhere in the region. King County was once firmly rooted in agriculture, forestry and mining. However, with the regional growth both the rural economy and the rural population are changing, as are the expectations of some rural residents for county services. Some residents are more accustomed to independent lifestyles focused around resource uses such as farming, dairying, keeping of livestock, or forestry. Other residents and visitors can be surprised by the sights, sounds, and smells associated with rural living; and can be accustomed to higher levels of service and facilities than are traditionally provided in the Rural Area.

One of the challenges facing the county is to provide for a diversity of lifestyle choices while providing public services at rural levels. The growth in the Puget Sound region affects rural character everywhere in the region. King County was once firmly rooted in agriculture, forestry and mining. However, with regional growth both the rural economy and the rural population are changing, as are the expectations of some rural residents for county services. Some residents are more accustomed to independent lifestyles focused around resource uses such as farming, dairying, keeping of livestock, or forestry. Other residents and visitors can be surprised by the sights, sounds, and smells associated with rural living; and can be accustomed to higher levels of service and facilities than are traditionally provided in the Rural Area.

As the county recognizes a profound difference between the nature and character of unincorporated rural King County as compared to the urban areas, ((t))it is the intent of the county to continue to

provide services at established rural levels (~~((and support the rural economic cluster businesses))~~) that support and help maintain rural character.

### **Public Engagement**

Several years ago, numerous rural residents realized both a need to protect their diverse communities and to represent their common interests to the county. Thus, the Unincorporated Area Councils (UACs) were created to represent the interests of rural residents and business owners, within a specific area.

~~((The four rural UACs are Four Creeks Unincorporated Area Council, Greater Maple Valley Area Council, Upper Bear Creek Unincorporated Area Council, and Vashon-Maury Island Community Council.~~

~~Although each UAC operates separately and has different by-laws, the UAC's are now working together to represent interests common throughout rural King County, such as growth impacts and transportation issues.~~

~~The GMA requires the protection of traditional rural activities and rural character. One of the challenges facing the county is to provide for a diversity of lifestyle choices while providing public services at rural levels.))~~

**R-102                      King County will continue to support the diversity and richness of its rural communities and their distinct character by working with the unincorporated area councils, ~~((community groups,))~~ community councils, community development associations, other organized groups, rural residents~~((,))~~ and business owners on programs to sustain and enhance the rural character of ~~((its))~~ rural and resource lands, Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers, and Rural Towns.**

## II. Rural Designation

### A. Rural Area Designation Criteria

The Rural Area designation in King County represents the multi-use nature of rural lands, including working farms and forests, livestock uses, home-based businesses and housing. The term Rural Area includes the Rural, Rural Commercial Neighborhood Centers, and Rural Towns designations on the Land Use Map. The sustainability and enhancement of these areas and their underlying economic health is critical to the range of lifestyle choices available in King County.

The criteria set forth in this section were used to draw the boundaries of the Rural Area designated by this plan.

- R-201**                      **It is a fundamental objective of the King County Comprehensive Plan to maintain the character of its designated Rural Area. The GMA specifies the rural element of comprehensive plans include measures that apply to rural development and protect the rural character of the area (RCW 36.70A.070(5)). The GMA defines rural character as it relates to land use and development patterns (RCW 36.70A.030(15)). This definition can be found in the Glossary of this Plan. Rural development can consist of a variety of uses that are consistent with the preservation of rural character and the requirements of the rural element. In order to implement GMA, it is necessary to define the development patterns that are considered rural, historical or traditional and do not encourage urban growth or create pressure for urban facilities and service. Therefore, King County’s land use regulations and development standards shall protect and enhance the following components of the Rural Area:**
- a.            The natural environment, particularly as evidenced by the health of wildlife and fisheries (especially salmon and trout), aquifers used for potable water, surface water bodies including Puget Sound and natural drainage systems and their riparian corridors;**



- b. Commercial and noncommercial farming, forestry, fisheries, mining and cottage industries;
- c. Historic resources, historical character and continuity, including archaeological and cultural sites important to tribes;
- d. Community small-town atmosphere, safety, and locally owned small businesses;
- e. Economically and fiscally healthy Rural Towns and Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers with clearly defined identities compatible with adjacent rural, agricultural, forestry and mining uses;
- f. Regionally significant parks, trails and open space;
- g. A variety of low-density housing choices compatible with adjacent farming, forestry and mining and not needing urban facilities and services; and
- h. Traditional rural land uses of a size and scale that blend with historic rural development.

**R-202**

The Rural Area designations shown on the King County Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map include areas that are rural in character and meet one or more of the following criteria:

- a. Opportunities exist for significant commercial or noncommercial farming and forestry (large-scale farms and forest lands are designated as Resource Lands);
- b. The area will help buffer nearby Resource Lands from conflicting urban uses;
- c. The area is contiguous to other lands in the Rural Area, Resource Lands or large, predominantly environmentally critical areas;
- d. There are major physical barriers to providing urban services at reasonable cost, or such areas will help foster more logical boundaries for urban public services and infrastructure;
- e. The area is not needed for the foreseeable future that is well beyond the 20-year forecast period to provide capacity for population or employment growth;

- f. **The area has outstanding scenic, historic, environmental, resource or aesthetic values that can best be protected by a Rural Area designation; or**
- g. **Significant environmental constraints make the area generally unsuitable for intensive urban development.**

The Rural Area includes all lands in King County outside of the designated Urban Growth Area (UGA), not including the designated Forest and Agricultural Production Districts. The Rural Area is generally located east of the UGA, with the exception of the entirety of Vashon-Maury Islands. Within the Rural Area, three land use categories are applied: Rural, allowing low-density residential development, forestry, farming, livestock uses, and a range of traditional rural uses; Rural Town, recognizing historical settlement patterns and allowing commercial uses to serve rural residents; and Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers, allowing small-scale convenience services for nearby rural residents.

While the GMA, the Countywide Planning Policies and King County's policies and regulations call for protecting the Rural Area by limiting housing densities, there are many other features besides density that characterize the Rural Area. Some of the most important features include integration of housing with traditional rural uses such as forestry, farming and keeping of livestock; protection of streams, wetlands and wildlife habitat; preservation of open vistas, wooded areas and scenic roadways; and reliance on minimal public services. King County is committed to maintaining these features as well, and the policies in this chapter call for continuing and expanding upon these efforts.

**R-203                      King County's Rural Area is considered to be permanent and shall not be redesignated to an Urban Growth Area until reviewed pursuant to the Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.130(3)) and the Countywide Planning (~~Policy FW-1~~) Policies.**

## **B.     Forestry and Agriculture in Rural King County**

The Rural designation includes working farms and forests. These contribute to rural character; the diversity and self-sufficiency of local economies; and open space, wildlife habitat, flood hazard management, and environmental quality. However, Rural Area land in farm and forest use has diminished since 1985, mostly through the conversion of these lands to residential uses. Pressures to

convert from resource use include the high land value for alternative uses and the encroachment of residential and other development that conflicts with the resource use.

Although most of King County's agriculture and timber lands are within designated Agricultural and Forest Production Districts, there is a significant land base for agriculture and forestry in the Rural Area. King County has studied this land base, has mapped agricultural use, and has identified rural forest areas where forestry will be enhanced and protected. Efforts to conserve the forest, farm, and livestock uses are important and include technical assistance, incentive programs, and the Transfer of Development Rights program (as presented in Section III).

- R-204**                      **Farming and forestry are vital to the preservation of rural King County and should be encouraged throughout the Rural Area. King County should encourage the retention of existing and establishment of new rural resource-based uses, with appropriate site management that protects habitat resources. King County's regulation of farming, keeping of livestock, and forestry in the Rural Area should be consistent with these guiding principles:**
- a.        Homeowner covenants for new subdivisions and short subdivisions in the Rural Area should not restrict farming and forestry;**
  - b.        Development regulations for resource-based activities should be tailored to the resource use and its level of impact;**
  - ((b)) c. Agricultural and silvicultural management practices should not be construed as public nuisances when carried on in compliance with applicable regulations, even though they may impact nearby residences; and**
  - ((e)) d. County environmental standards for forestry and agriculture should protect environmental quality, especially in relation to water and fisheries resources, while encouraging forestry and farming.**

- R-205**                      **Uses related to and appropriate for the Rural Area include those relating to agriculture, forestry, mineral extraction, and fisheries, such as the raising of livestock, growing of crops, creating value-added products, and sale of agricultural**

**products; small-scale cottage industries; and recreational and small-scale tourism uses that rely on a rural location.**

Most of the policies related to agriculture and forestry are found in the Resource Lands section (Section VI) of this chapter. Many of these policies are relevant to agriculture and forestry in the Rural Area as well as in the designated Agricultural and Forest Production districts.

The importance of farming and forestry to the Rural Area was first emphasized in the 1994 Comprehensive Plan. Subsequently, the county took steps to encourage the continuation of farm and forestry practices in the Rural Area, including developing a Farm and Forest Report in 1996. The report recommended a series of actions to protect the rural farm and forest land base as well as the practices of farming and forestry, including the provision of technical assistance to aid property owners in land management, outreach to owners of properties vulnerable to development, creating opportunities for property owners to sell their development rights, and seeking funding for public acquisition of rural resource lands. The report also recommended the continuation of the King County Agriculture Commission and the appointment of a Rural Forest Commission to review the impact of proposed regulations on rural forestry and recommend incentive programs.

## **1. Forestry**

Since 1996, King County has been actively implementing the recommendations of the Farm and Forest Report through the Forestry Program. Throughout the Rural Area, King County encourages small-scale forestry and land stewardship through a variety of land owner incentive and community-based programs that:

- a. Promote forest stewardship through education and technical assistance programs, such as the Washington State University Extension Forest Stewardship Programs;
- b. Provide technical assistance and information to landowner groups and community associations seeking to implement land/water stewardship, habitat restoration and management plans;
- c. Create opportunities and incentives for voluntary, cooperative management of woodlots and open space currently in separate ownership;
- d. Offer technical assistance and information to landowners who are interested in managing their forest for non-timber specialty forest products;
- e. Explore opportunities for providing relief from special levies and assessments; and

- f. Provide education and assistance in the control of noxious and invasive weeds.

The county encourages forest stewardship planning and active forest management as a means of reducing conversion of forestland to other uses, improving ~~((to improve))~~ forest health, increasing ~~((to sustain))~~ rural economic prosperity ~~((activities))~~ and reducing ~~((to reduce))~~ risks from wildfire. Hundreds of landowners have written forest stewardship plans and ~~((entered the Timber Land Current Use Taxation Program. Some of these landowners have had difficulty implementing their plans because of development regulations))~~ have enrolled in current use taxation programs, demonstrating a commitment to forest management.

The county has worked with the Rural Forest Commission to identify and propose changes to the code to remove impediments to the implementation of forest stewardship plans. ~~((The small size of forested properties in the Rural Area means that))~~ However, the small size of rural forest properties presents another obstacle to implementation of forest plans. Because the volume of timber harvested at any one time is usually small, ~~((Under these circumstances))~~ it is difficult for landowners to find forestry services or log buyers. Many contractors do not consider small sites to be forestland with potential management opportunities, and they have not developed the tools and skills to work with small sites. There is untapped potential for work to be done by the private sector on small private forestlands. Outreach to forestry consultants and labor contractors concerning the potential small lot forest market is needed. Continuing forestry technical assistance and cost share to landowners, who otherwise are unlikely to pursue management activities, will encourage active forest stewardship and rural economic development.

King County continues to explore ways to facilitate the harvest, utilization and marketing of wood products grown in the Rural Area.

**R-206                    The conservation of forest land and forestry throughout the Rural Area shall remain a priority for King County. Landowner property tax incentives ~~((programs))~~, technical assistance, permit assistance, regulatory actions and community-based education shall be used throughout the Rural Area to sustain the forest land base and forestry activities. King County should ensure that its regulations, permitting**

**processes and incentive programs facilitate and encourage active forest management and implementation of forest stewardship plans.**

The Forestry Program will continue to evaluate additional ways to conserve rural ~~((resource))~~ forest lands and encourage forestry. In addition, King County has identified properties for acquisition, and has worked in partnership with other jurisdictions and citizen groups to match high priority sites with funding sources for permanent conservation. King County owns and manages approximately 20,000 acres of forestland. Of this, 3,300 acres are designated as working forests: ~~((King County owns and manages over 3,000 acres of forest properties))~~ Taylor Mountain Forest, Ring Hill, Sugarloaf, Island Center, Dockton, and Mitchell Hill forests. The county has extended its forest stewardship program to implement active management for forest health on other forested open space properties. The county has also conserved several forest properties that have remained in private ownership by purchasing the development rights.

Although economic incentive programs and technical assistance are available to all property owners in the Rural Area interested in pursuing small-scale forestry, special efforts to maintain forest cover and the practice of sustainable forestry are warranted where there are opportunities to sustain large, contiguous blocks of rural forest. The Agricultural and Forest Lands map identifies such areas as Rural Forest Focus Areas and notes the locations and boundaries of each focus area.

**R-207 Rural Forest Focus Areas are identified geographic areas where special efforts are necessary and feasible to maintain forest cover and the practice of sustainable forestry. King County shall target funding, when available, new economic incentive programs, regulatory actions, and additional technical assistance to the ~~((identified))~~ Rural Forest Focus Areas. Strategies specific to each Rural Forest Focus Area shall be developed, employing the combination of incentive and technical assistance programs best suited to each focus area.**

**R-208 The Rural Forest Focus Areas should be maintained in parcels of 20 acres or more in order to retain large, contiguous blocks of rural forest. Regulations or incentives should seek to achieve a maximum density of one home per 20 acres.**

## 2. Farming

The 1996 Farm and Forest Report provided a series of strategies for conserving farmland and sustaining farming both within the designated Agricultural Production District (APD) where the prime agricultural soils are found and outside the APD, where there continues to be a significant amount of farming. A 2003 survey identified 25,000 acres in the Rural Area in active agriculture, much of it in livestock production.

**R-209                      The county should develop ~~((specific))~~ incentives to encourage agricultural activities in the remaining prime farmlands located outside the Agricultural Production District. These incentives could include tax credits, expedited permit review, reduced permit fees, permit exemptions for activities complying with best management practices, assistance with agricultural waste management or similar programs.**

The raising and management of livestock and the production of associated products are components of the county's agricultural economy. Livestock raised in the county includes, but is not limited to, cattle, buffalo, sheep, hogs, llamas, alpacas, goats, and poultry.

**R-210                      King County supports the raising and management of livestock and the production of related value-added products. The management of livestock and the lands and structures supporting the raising of livestock, should be consistent with industry best management practices and with county, state, and federal regulations related to the specific industry.**

## C. Equestrian Activities

King County recognizes the contributions of equestrian livestock husbandry, training, competition, and recreation activities to the overall rural quality of life and economic base in King County. ~~((These))~~ Equestrian activities provide a lifestyle value to numerous county residents and visitors and a source of ~~((economic))~~ revenue for rural residents and business owners. There are numerous organizations that support the equestrian industry by providing education and promoting equine husbandry, including the

King County Agriculture Program, King County Extension Service, Future Farmers of America, 4H, the King County Executive Horse Council, Backcounty Horsemen, the Enumclaw Forested Foothills Recreation Association, and numerous other special interest equestrian-related groups.

~~((In the 2004 Comprehensive Plan, Equestrian Communities were identified and mapped to support coordinated activities between the county and the equestrian industry, especially in preserving trails. However, a))~~ In recent years the diversity of equestrian uses has expanded throughout the rural portions of the county, going well beyond the traditional uses of a child and his or her favorite horse, a 4-H horse show, or a trail ride through the woods. Today's equestrian uses include raising and training a variety of horse breeds, an increase in the number of riding arenas, and the construction of a state-of-the-art horse rehabilitation facility. This diversity of equestrian uses ((are found throughout the county and these uses)) should be sustained and encouraged where compatible with the existing character of the area in which ((new)) equestrian facilities are proposed to be built or expanded.

Several constraints may limit the development or expansion of equestrian activities. Even though the Growth Management Act limits ((As)) growth, some growth continues to occur throughout the rural areas of the county, impacting open land to sustain livestock, equestrian activities, and existing or potential trail segments that may be lost to uncoordinated land developments~~((and road improvements))~~. ~~((Also, requirements of the Endangered Species Act may limit livestock management choices and the location of new equestrian facilities on land constrained by large riparian corridors. Additionally, with the county's emphasis on preserving agricultural and forestry lands within the Agricultural and Forest Productions Districts, the development of large equestrian facilities of a size and scale that would be incompatible with agricultural and forestry practices within these districts should be discouraged.))~~

**R-211                      King County should continue to support and sustain equestrian activities and ensure that regulations support those activities compatible with the area in which they are located. The county should encourage subdivision layouts that preserve opportunities for livestock and equestrian activities.**

Trail riding throughout rural King County is a popular ((E)) equestrian use((s)) enjoyed by both urban and rural residents((in the county include trail riding)). Although llama and alpaca treks are becoming



increasingly popular, most of the trail riding in King County is on horses and mules. Several constraints may limit the continuation, development, or expansion of equestrian trails or trail segments including uncoordinated land development and road improvements. Additionally, as ownership of private and/or public land with existing trails is transferred, these trails may be lost when easements are not in place to protect the trails at the time of the transaction or if the new owner is not aware that a trail runs across the parcel.

The following policies address the need to continue to support trails for equestrian, multi-use, and existing trail linkage purposes.

- R-212 King County should support ~~((the identified))~~ equestrian trail use ~~((s in))~~ throughout the Rural Area and in the Agricultural and Forest Production Districts as appropriate by:**
- a. Working with local communities to identify and protect multiple-use trails and key linkages that support ~~((providing facilities on King County rights-of-way where not in conflict with the terms of utility easements to accommodate))~~ horse travel;**
  - b. ~~((by m))~~ Maintaining equestrian links, including multiple-use trails, where appropriate;**
  - c. ~~((and by adoption of supportive land use regulations for use of these areas for horsekeeping.))~~ Ensuring parking areas serving multiple use trails are designed and constructed, whenever possible to handle parking for horse trailers; and**
  - d. ~~((King County will work with local communities to identify and protect multiple-use trails and other public trails that support horse travel within the Rural Area.))~~ Constructing and maintaining equestrian trails under County ownership or management consistent with King County Backcountry Trail or Regional Trail Standards whenever possible.**

- R-213 Soft-surface multiple-use trails in corridors separate from road rights-of-way are the preferred option for equestrian travel for safety reasons and to avoid conflicts with residential activities associated with the street. Existing off-road trails should**

be preserved during site development, with relocation as appropriate to accommodate development while maintaining trail connections. The King County Road Design and Construction Standards will accommodate safe equestrian travel within road rights-of-way. Where appropriate, capital improvement programs for transportation and park facilities shall also enable the use of new facilities by equestrians. ~~((Construction standards for multiple-use nonmotorized trails to be established in road rights-of-way within the Rural Area should assure a minimum eight-foot-wide gravel shoulder on arterial roads and 4.5 foot gravel shoulder on local access roads, or provide a trail separated from the driving lanes by a ditch or other barrier. Construction standards for soft-surface multiple-use nonmotorized trails in corridors separate from road rights-of-way shall be consistent with current trail construction and maintenance practices as promulgated by the U.S. Forest Service.))~~

- R-214 King County's land use regulations should protect rural equestrian community trails by supporting preservation of existing equestrian trail links in the Rural Area and within the Agricultural and Forest Production Districts~~((, protecting livestock from intrusions from residential development, and encouraging subdivision layouts that preserve opportunities for keeping of horses.))~~ Representatives of the equestrian community ~~((shall))~~ should be given the opportunity to review and monitor regulatory and ~~((programmatic))~~ policy actions by King County, such as rural area development regulations, that have the potential to affect equestrian ~~((uses))~~ trails.
- R-215 Property owners in the Agricultural and Forest Production Districts are encouraged to voluntarily allow continued equestrian access to existing trails or alternative access if the existing trail impedes future use of their property.
- R-216 Equestrian trails should be a category in the county's Public Benefit Rating System, so that a landowner who provides trail access may qualify for a tax reduction under the program.

R-217

County departments negotiating trades or sales of county land shall determine whether any historically established trails exist on the property, and, when economically feasible, ensure that those trails are retained or replaced (~~(to ensure that key linkages to regional systems))~~ and are not lost as a condition of the trade or sale. Trails that provide key linkages, for either multi-use or equestrian trails, should be considered to have strategic value to the county's trail network and should be retained or replaced whenever possible.

### III. Rural Densities and Development

#### A. Rural Growth Forecast

The GMA requires most new growth to be accommodated in Urban Growth Areas (UGA), yet growth may be permitted outside the UGA provided it is not urban in character.

The Rural Area is not expected to accommodate large amounts of growth, ~~but it ((and))~~ allows for low-density residential development and other traditional rural uses. The GMA requires that rural development be contained and controlled to ensure the protection of rural character, assure the visual compatibility of rural development with the surrounding rural area, protect environmentally critical areas and habitat, and protect against conflicts with natural resource uses such as farming, forestry, and mining.

In 2009 ~~((2002))~~, the Growth Management Planning Council adopted urban area targets to accommodate the most recent ~~((2022))~~ countywide population projections supplied by the state. These urban targets assumed a rural area forecast of fewer than ~~((an additional))~~ 6,000 additional housing units during the period 2006 to 2031 ~~((2001 to 2022))~~. No attempt has been made to allocate this rural forecast to subareas of rural King County.

Since adoption of King County's initial comprehensive plan under GMA in 1994, annual building permit activity in the Rural Area has continued to drop to an average of under 400 ~~((approximately 570))~~ new building permits per year since 2007 ~~((for the period 1999-2002))~~. Between 2000 and 2010, Rural and Resource areas grew by about 4,000 housing units to a total of 49,000. However, the population of these areas actually declined slightly during the decade, and now stands at less than 124,000.

Application of new zoning measures and other regulatory tools have ~~((also))~~ helped to reduce subdivision activity, but if the current rate of 400 ~~((570))~~ new homes per year continues, the Rural Area could be built out to its full capacity within 25 ~~((20))~~ years of the date of this plan.

The application of lower-density zoning or more restrictive standards could reduce the creation of new lots, but there are limited opportunities to address development of existing legal lots. One measure that

would slow the growth rate on existing lots would be the establishment of an annual limit on the number of building permits to be issued in the Rural Area. This alternative would be more palatable if it were linked to a transfer of development rights program or a development rights purchase program.

**R-301**                    **A low growth rate is desirable for the Rural Area, including Rural Towns, to comply with the State Growth Management Act, prevent sprawl and the overburdening of rural services, reduce the need for capital expenditures for rural roads, maintain rural character, ~~((and))~~ protect the environment and reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions. However, until such time as the Urban Unincorporated Areas are annexed, King County shall continue to provide services in these areas ~~((focus its resources on the unincorporated Urban Area until such time that these areas become part of cities))~~. All possible tools may be used to limit growth in the Rural Area. Appropriate tools include land use designations, development regulations, level of service standards and incentives.**

## **B. Residential Densities**

The low-density residential living choices available in the Rural Area provide an important part of the variety of housing options for King County residents. The residential land use policies in this section, together with their implementing regulations, strike a balance between making rural housing available to those who desire a rural way of life and keeping densities and the number of housing units low enough so they can be supported by a rural level of public facilities and services, be compatible with nearby commercial and noncommercial farming and forestry, and prevent or significantly reduce adverse impacts of development on the natural environment. These policies and implementing regulations could allow 14,000 to 24,000 more housing units at ultimate buildout in addition to the roughly 58,000 residences existing in the designated Rural Area in 2000. The Transfer of Development Rights Program will help reduce development capacity in the Rural Area, and King County should continue to seek other programs that provide economic incentives for property owners to voluntarily limit residential development of their land.

**R-302**                    **Residential development in the Rural Area should occur as follows:**

- a. **In Rural Towns at a variety of densities and housing types, compatible with maintenance of historic resources and community character; and**
- b. **Outside Rural Towns at low densities compatible with traditional rural character and uses, farming, forestry, mining and rural service levels.**

The use of land and the density of development (measured as the number of homes or other structures per acre or per square mile of land) are key determinants and contributors to the character of the Rural Area, as described above in Section A. Although human settlement of King County's Rural Area has a wide variety of uses and densities, both the historical and desirable range of uses and densities defined here are necessarily narrower and less intense than that found in the Urban Area. Residential development at very low densities (including the land for accessory uses, on-site sewage disposal and local water supply) consumes or will consume most of the land in the Rural Area. Residential density may be the single, most important factor in protecting or destroying rural character that can be influenced by government policies and regulations.

Low overall densities in the Rural Area will be achieved through very large minimum lot sizes or limited clustering at the same average densities when facilities and services permit (for example, soil conditions allow on-site sewage disposal on smaller lots). The Rural Area cannot be a significant source of affordable housing for King County residents, but it will contain diverse housing opportunities through a mix of large lots, clustering, existing smaller lots and higher densities in rural cities and Rural Towns, as services permit.

~~((Future development in the Rural Area will, to a great extent, be controlled by the availability of transportation concurrency. Concurrency certificates are issued only to proposed developments that meet strict level of service standards. In the Rural Area, this standard is an average volume/capacity ratio of 0.69 during the afternoon peak period. Many of the traffic zones in the Rural Area are near or already out of compliance; therefore, proposed subdivisions are being denied concurrency certificates. In the Transportation Chapter, policies prevent the construction of road projects in the Rural Area for the purpose of increasing road capacity, meaning that these zones will remain out of compliance.))~~

**R-303                      The Rural Area should have low residential densities that can be sustained by minimal infrastructure improvements such as septic systems and rural roads, cause minimal environmental degradation and impacts to significant historic resources,**

and that will not cumulatively create the future necessity or expectation of urban levels of services. ~~((Concurrency certificates for proposed new subdivisions in the Rural Area shall not be issued if trips generated by such subdivisions would exceed rural transportation level of service standards.))~~

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

Although King County designated Resource Lands and zoned extensive portions of its territory as Agricultural Production Districts or Forest Production Districts, very low residential densities adjacent to Resource Lands are essential to minimize land use conflicts. In addition, a significant part of the Rural Area land base is still used for farming or forestry uses. Therefore, suitability of lands for continuing resource uses and proximity to designated natural resource lands will be important considerations in applying the lower rural densities.

**R-305** A residential density of one home per 20 acres or 10 acres shall be achieved through regulatory and incentive programs on lands in the Rural Area that are managed for forestry or farming respectively, and are found to qualify for a Rural Forest Focus Area designation in accordance with R-207.

**R-306** A residential density of one home per 10 acres shall be applied in the Rural Area where:

- a. The lands are adjacent to or within one-quarter mile of designated Agricultural Production Districts, the Forest Production District or legally approved long-term mineral resource extraction sites; or
- b. The lands contain significant environmentally constrained areas as defined by county ordinance, policy or federal or state law, or regionally significant resource areas or substantial critical habitat as determined by legislatively approved basin plans or Watershed Resource Inventory Area Plans; and
- c. The predominant lot size is greater than or equal to 10 acres in size.

- R-307**                    **For Vashon-Maury Island, a residential density of one home per 10 acres:**
- a.        Shall be maintained on areas zoned RA-10 as of 1994 to help protect community character and reduce adverse impacts on the island’s infrastructure; and**
  - b.        Shall be applied to areas with a predominant lot size of 10 acres or greater and mapped as category I Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas.**

- R-308**                    **A residential density of one home per 5 acres shall be applied in the Rural Area where:**
- a.        The land is physically suitable for development with minimal environmentally sensitive features or critical habitat as determined by legislatively adopted watershed based plans;**
  - b.        Development can be supported by rural services;**
  - c.        The land does not meet the criteria in this plan for lower density designations; and**
  - d.        The predominant lot size is less than 10 acres.**

Although King County intends to retain low residential densities in the Rural Area, residential development has occurred in the past on a wide variety of lot sizes. Both existing homes on small lots and rural infill on vacant, small lots contribute to the variety of housing choices in the Rural Area. In some cases, however, rural-level facilities and services (e.g. on-site sewage disposal, individual water supply systems) may not permit development of the smallest vacant lots. ~~((The effect of))~~ Policy R-309 ~~((is to))~~ recognizes that some of the Rural Area has already been subdivided at a density greater than one lot per five acres (for example, parts of the shoreline of Vashon Island), but not to allow more than one home per five acres on unplatted acreage. Zoning to implement policies R-306 through R-309 has been applied through subarea and local plans and area zoning maps.

- R-309**                    **The RA-2.5 zone has generally been applied to rural areas with an existing pattern of lots below five acres in size that were created prior to the adoption of the 1994 Comprehensive Plan. These smaller lots may still be developed individually or combined, provided that applicable standards for sewage disposal, environmental**



**protection, water supply, roads and rural fire protection can be met. A subdivision at a density of one home per 2.5 acres shall only be permitted through the transfer of development rights (~~credits~~) from property in the designated Rural Forest Focus Areas. The site receiving the density must be approved as a Transfer of Development Rights receiving site in accordance with the King County Code. Properties on Vashon-Maury Islands shall not be eligible as receiving sites.**

Accessory dwelling units provide opportunities for affordable housing, on-site housing for workers and caretakers, housing for extended family members, and rental income for landowners. However, detached accessory dwelling units function similarly to separate homes on separate lots and should be treated as such. When a subdivision is proposed for a property that already has a house and a detached accessory dwelling unit, the house and accessory dwelling unit shall count as two units. For example, on an RA-5 zoned 20 acre parcel, which could be subdivided into four lots, the existing primary dwelling and the accessory unit in a separate building shall count as two of the four units allowed on the site.

**R-310                      Accessory dwelling units in structures detached from the primary dwelling shall be counted as a separate dwelling unit for the purpose of lot calculations under the zoning in place at the time of a proposed subdivision.**

**R-311                      The King County Residential Density Incentive Program shall not be available for development in the Rural zones.**

## **C.     Transfer of Development Rights Program**

The Growth Management Act encourages the use of innovative techniques for land use management. King County has a long tradition of using such techniques, including programs promoting transfers of development rights, to achieve its land management goals.

To that end, King County promotes the transfer of development rights from land valuable to the public (“sending sites”), to land better able to accommodate growth (“receiving sites”). The Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program is a voluntary program that allows sending site landowners to achieve an economic return on their property while maintaining it in forestry, farming, habitat, parks, or

open space in perpetuity. It also increases housing opportunities in Urban Area receiving sites where urban services and infrastructure can accommodate additional growth.

Sending site landowners choose to sever the right to develop their land from the land itself and sell their development rights to receiving site landowners who are permitted to build additional development capacity above the base density, but at or below the allowed maximum density (~~at greater densities than allowed~~) under current zoning, with the purchase of transferable development rights. When transferable development rights are allocated to sending site property owners, the land is protected from future development in perpetuity through a conservation easement. In so doing, the TDR program: (1) benefits (~~small rural~~) Rural and Resource land property owners by providing them financial compensation to not develop their land, (2) directs (~~rural~~) future Rural and Resource land development growth into urban areas, saving the County the cost of providing services to rural development and yielding climate change benefits through reduced household transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions, and (3) permanently preserves land through private market transactions.

**R-312** As an innovative means to permanently preserve private lands with countywide public benefit, to encourage higher densities in urban areas and reduce residential development capacity in Rural Area and Resource Lands, King County shall continue to operate an effective TDR Program.

**R-313** The priority of the TDR Program is to reduce development potential in the Rural Area and Resource Lands by encouraging the transfer of development rights from private rural lands into the Urban Growth Area.

**R-314** King County supports and shall work actively to facilitate the transfer of Rural Area and Resource Lands development rights to:

- a. Preserve the rural environment, encourage retention of resource-based uses and reduce service demands;
  - b. Provide permanent protection to significant natural resources;
  - c. Increase the regional open space system;
  - d. Maintain low density development in the Rural Area and Resource Lands;
- and

- e. Provide mitigation for the impacts of urban development on global climate change ~~((warming))~~ by simultaneously reducing transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions from exurban development ~~((transportation))~~ and sequestering carbon through retention of forest cover.

R-315

To promote transfers of development rights, King County shall:

- a. Facilitate transfers from private property owners with sending sites to property owners with receiving sites;
- b. Operate the King County TDR Bank to ~~((buy and sell))~~ facilitate the TDR market and bridge the time gap between willing sellers and buyers of TDRs through buying, holding, and selling transferable development rights;
- c. Work with cities to develop interlocal agreements that encourage transfers of development rights from Rural and Resource lands into cities; ~~((and))~~
- d. Seek public amenity funding to enhance the livability of incorporated and unincorporated area receiving site neighborhoods accepting increased densities through TDR; and
- e. Work with the State Department of Commerce, PSRC, and King County cities to implement Washington State Regional TDR legislation.

## 1. Sending and Receiving Sites

R-316

Eligible sending sites shall be lands designated on the King County Comprehensive Plan land use map as Rural Area (RA), Agriculture (A), Forestry (F), and Urban Separator, and shall provide permanent land protection to create a significant public benefit. Priority sending sites are:

- a. Lands in Rural Forest Focus Areas;
- b. Lands in close proximity ~~((adjacent))~~ to the Urban Growth Area boundary;
- c. Lands contributing to the protection of endangered and threatened species;
- d. Lands that are suitable for inclusion in and provide important links to the regional open space system; ~~((and))~~

- e. ~~((Agricultural and))~~ Agricultural lands that contribute to the local food system;
- f. Forest Production District lands;
- g. Intact shorelines of Puget Sound; and
- h. Lands identified as important according to the Washington State Department of Ecology's Watershed Characterization analyses.

~~((R-317 For transfer of development rights purposes only, qualified sending sites are allocated development rights as follows:~~

- a. ~~Sending sites with Rural Area or Agricultural zoning shall be allocated one TDR for every five acres of gross land area;~~
- b. ~~Sending sites with Forest zoning shall be allocated one TDR for every eighty acres of gross land area;~~
- c. ~~Sending sites with Urban Separator land use designation shall be allocated four TDRs for every one acre of gross land area;~~
- d. ~~If a sending site has an existing dwelling or retains one or more development rights for future use, the gross acreage shall be reduced in accordance with the site's zoning base density for the purposes of TDR allocation; and~~
- e. ~~King County shall provide bonus TDRs to sending sites in the Rural Area as follows:~~
  - 1. ~~The sending site is a vacant RA zoned property and is no larger than one-half the size requirement of the base density for the zone; and~~
  - 2. ~~The sending site is a RA zoned property and is located on a shoreline of the state and has a shoreline designation of conservancy or natural.))~~

R-318 Prior to the county's allocation of transferable development rights to a sending site landowner, the landowner shall record and place on title of the sending site parcel(s) a conservation easement documenting the development restrictions. If a development right(s) is being retained for future development, the subsequent development must be clustered, and the tract preserved with a permanent

conservation easement shall be larger than the developed portion. ~~((In the case of lands within the Rural Forest Focus Areas, no more than one dwelling unit per 20 acres shall be retained, and the tract preserved with a conservation easement shall be at least 15 acres in size.))~~

R-319

TDRs may be ~~((made to))~~ used on receiving sites as follows, and in the following order of preference:

- a. ~~((Unincorporated urban areas. Preference should be given to locations within designated urban centers, and to areas adjacent to transit stations and park-and-ride lots;~~
- b. ~~Transfers into incorporated areas shall be detailed in an interlocal agreement between the city receiving the development rights and the county;))~~  
Incorporated Cities. Transfers into incorporated areas shall be detailed in an interlocal agreement between the city receiving the development rights and the county;
- b. Unincorporated urban commercial centers;
- c. Other unincorporated urban areas; and
- ~~((e))~~ d. Rural Areas zoned RA-2.5, ((that are not)) unless they are on Vashon Island, may receive transfers of development rights, but only from the Rural Forest Focus Areas.

~~((R-322))~~ R-319a King County should ~~((increase))~~ seek funding for incorporated and unincorporated urban area amenities ~~((and the TDR Bank and seek private and other public funding))~~ to strengthen the TDR program and facilitate the transfer of development rights from ~~((the))~~ Rural and Resource Areas into the King County Urban Growth Area ~~((in order))~~ to preserve the rural environment, encourage retention of rural and resource-based uses, and avoid urban service demands in the Rural Area. ~~((King County should pursue public or private partnerships, and bond or levy proposals, for additional TDR Bank funding to target threatened private rural or resource lands. Rights purchased through such a program could be sold into any appropriate urban location.))~~

**R-319b**                      King County should pursue public funding and public-private partnerships, and bond or levy proposals, for additional TDR Bank funding to target threatened private rural or resource lands. Development rights purchased through such a program should be sold into any appropriate urban location.

## **2.      Rural and Resource Land Preservation TDR Program**

Rural and Resource Lands face increasing development pressure, yet the county must simultaneously plan for, and allow, future development growth. This tension makes it incumbent on the county to strengthen its TDR efforts. For this reason, King County seeks to increase the number of development right transfers and adopt an expanded Rural and Resource Land Preservation TDR program to reduce and redirect rural development potential into the urban areas.

**R-320**                      The goals of the Rural and Resource Land Preservation Program are to: (1) reduce the development potential in rural and resource lands by 25%; (2) increase activity in the TDR market; (3) bolster demand for TDRs; (4) offer rural and resource property owners access to incentive programs; (5) protect low-density rural areas from encroaching urban development; and (6) reduce ~~((carbon))~~ greenhouse gas emissions by decreasing vehicle miles traveled from the rural and resource areas and by sequestering carbon ~~((in the Rural Area))~~.

**R-321**                      The Rural and Resource Land Preservation TDR Program shall include, but is not limited to, the following:

a.        In addition to the density that is allowed on a receiving site in the urban growth area from the purchase of TDRs, the county shall evaluate the climate change benefits ~~((related impacts of the proposed development. In so doing the county shall consider the climate change effects))~~ achieved by ~~((related to))~~ reducing transportation related greenhouse gas emissions~~((, sequestering of carbon on the sending site, and any other climate change effects))~~ that result from the transfer of development rights from the sending site, provided that such consideration is not precluded by

administrative rules promulgated by the state(~~(--Furthermore, any standards related to consideration of climate change impacts through the SEPA process shall be subject to council review and adoption by ordinance))~~);

- b. In the Rural Area, a development proposal for a short subdivision creating up to four lots may purchase TDRs from other Rural Area properties in the same travel shed, or the TDR Bank, in order to satisfy transportation concurrency requirements. The transfer shall not result in an increase in allowable density on the receiving site. A short subdivision creating two lots where the property has been owned by the applicant for five or more years and where the property has not been subdivided in the last ten years shall satisfy the transportation concurrency requirements without having to purchase TDRs;
- c. King County shall provide an added density bonus of up to a 100% increase above the base density allowed in K.C. Code 21A.12.030, when TDRs are used for projects within any designated commercial center or activity center within the Urban Growth Area that provides enhanced walkability design and incorporates transit oriented development;
- d. King County may allow accessory dwelling units in the Rural Area that are greater than one thousand square feet, but less than 1,500 square feet, if the property owner purchases one TDR from the Rural Area; and
- e. King County may allow a detached accessory dwelling unit on a RA-5 zoned lot that is two and one-half acres or greater and less than three and three-quarters acres if the property owner purchases one TDR from the Rural Area.

R-322

*Policy moved to R-319a*

## **D. Nonresidential Uses**

Although low-density residential development, farming and forestry are the primary uses in the Rural Area, some compatible public and private uses are appropriate and contribute to rural character.

Compatible uses might include small, neighborhood churches, feed and grain stores, produce stands, forest product sales and home occupations such as woodcrafters, small day care facilities or veterinary services. In addition, it may be necessary to locate some public facilities in the Rural Area, such as utility installations that serve rural homes. Any allowed nonresidential uses should be designed to blend with rural residential development and resource uses.

**R-323                    Nonresidential uses in the Rural Area shall be limited to those that:**

- a.        Provide convenient local products and services for nearby rural residents;**
- b.        Require location in a Rural Area;**
- c.        Support natural resource-based industries;**
- d.        Provide adaptive reuse of significant historic resources; or**
- e.        Provide recreational opportunities that are compatible with the  
                 surrounding Rural Area.**

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

**R-324                    Golf facilities shall be permitted when located outside of Rural Forest Focus Areas, Regionally Significant Resource Areas and Locally Significant Resource Areas, as a conditional use, in the RA-2.5 and RA-5 zones.**

The service area of most schools in the Rural Area is large and relatively sparsely populated. Placing schools in rural cities or Rural Towns allows them to be served with urban-level utilities and fire protection and to be used efficiently for other community activities.

**R-325                    In the Rural Area, elementary schools may locate where required to serve neighborhoods. New middle/junior high schools and high schools and school facilities are encouraged to locate in rural cities or unincorporated Rural Towns. In reviewing proposals for middle/junior high and high schools and school facilities outside rural cities or Rural Towns, King County should ensure that any approved project will not stimulate local demand for urban-level services. In order to support**



the availability of public facilities and services for educational purposes, public schools and public school facilities may exceed nonresidential development standards as provided for by county code, shall comply at a minimum with applicable surface water design manual standards and may be provided with public sewer services in accordance with F-249.

**R-325a**                    **Schools and other public facilities may not be located in or impact Agricultural Production Districts or Forest Production Districts.**

**R-326**                    **Small airfields beyond those already established in the Rural Area should not be permitted, due to their cumulative impacts on air traffic and nearby uses.**

**R-327**                    **Library services for the Rural Area should be provided by bookmobiles, or by libraries in Rural Towns or rural cities.**

## **E.     Character/Development Standards**

The aesthetic qualities and character of the Rural Area depend on a combination of factors, including low densities; a high ratio of undeveloped or undisturbed soil and natural or crop vegetation to development, such as roads and structures; historic buildings and landscapes; and minimal development standards, public facilities and services beyond those needed for environmental protection and basic public health and safety.

**R-328**                    **New subdivisions in the Rural Area should strive to maintain the size and scale of traditional development patterns and rural character.**

**R-329**                    **New subdivisions in the Rural Area should be designed and developed to maximize conservation of existing forest cover and native vegetation, and to minimize impervious surfaces within individual lots and in the subdivision as a whole. King County shall develop additional site design standards for new subdivisions that further reduce the impacts of new homes in the Rural Area on the natural environment, resource uses and other adjacent land uses.**

- R-330** Site design standards for new subdivisions in the Rural Area should include: minimization of paved surfaces; limitations on entrance signage; preservation of natural contours, existing meadows and opportunities for keeping of horses; and other standards to limit features typical of urban or suburban development.
- R-331** Rural residential development adjacent to Agricultural and Forest Production Districts shall be sited to minimize interference with activities related to resource uses. Residences next to the Forest Production District shall be built with greater setbacks from the Forest Production District boundaries for safety and to reduce nuisance complaints.
- R-332** To maintain traditional rural development patterns and assure continued opportunities for resource activities in the Rural Area, large lot development is preferred in the Rural Area. Clustering of lots is permitted when:
- a. The development provides equal or greater protection of the natural environment, natural resource lands, historic resources or archaeological sites;
  - b. Clusters are limited in size to be compatible with surrounding large lots or nearby agricultural and forestry uses;
  - c. The clustered development is offset with a permanent resource land tract preserved for forestry or agriculture, as designated by the owner at time of subdivision or short subdivision, or a permanent open space tract. Under no circumstances shall the tract be reserved for future development; and
  - d. The development can be served by rural facility and service levels (such as on-site sewage disposal and rural fire protection).

Resource and open space tracts often require stewardship over time to prevent or control invasive species encroachment and to restore forest health, species diversity, and wildlife habitat structure.

- R-332a** **When a resource or open space tract is created as part of a plat, the county should require a stewardship plan to ensure that appropriate management of the tract.**

Low-density development in the Rural Area will have different residential street needs from those in the Urban Growth Area. Densities and travel demand in the Rural Area are very low and road maintenance is a proportionately greater per capita cost than in the Urban Growth Area.

Rural streets and roads outside Rural Towns generally will have no more than two travel lanes, no curbs or sidewalks and feature unpaved shoulders and open drainage ditches. Local access streets for residential subdivisions will constitute a significant proportion of the site disturbance and impervious surface associated with new development in the Rural Area and therefore must take the environment into consideration equally with traffic flow and vehicular access.

**R-333**                      **King County shall continue to support the rural development standards that have been established to protect the natural environment by addressing seasonal and maximum clearing limits, impervious surface limits, surface water management standards that emphasize preservation of natural drainage systems and water quality, groundwater protection, and resource-based practices. These standards should be designed to provide appropriate exceptions for lands that are to be developed for kindergarten through twelfth grade public schools and school facilities, provided that the school project and all associated roadway safety enhancements shall comply at a minimum with the requirements of the King County Surface Water Design Manual.**

## **F. Sustainable Development**

Additional policies on sustainable development are located in Chapter 2. These policies also apply in the Rural Area.

**R-334**                      **King County shall encourage, support and promote the application of sustainable development practices in all private sector development within the Rural Area.**

**R-335**                      **King County shall provide assistance through development of customized stewardship plans for individual properties, to help property owners understand**

their properties' characteristics and the potential impacts of their actions, and to make sustainable land use choices that protect natural resources.

## **G. ~~((Low Impact Development))~~ Surface Water Management**

Current development practices can adversely impact ~~((water resources))~~ both the quantity and quality of water entering the natural environment. ~~((Low impact development (LID) is an approach to land development that works to preserve a site's natural hydrologic functions by protecting and enhancing native vegetation and soils, reducing impervious surface and managing stormwater at the source. These techniques are well suited to development in rural residential zoned areas.))~~ King County has been and will continue to be a leader in developing and implementing state-of-the-art stormwater management techniques including pollutant source control at businesses and homes, stormwater flow control and water quality treatment facilities, and how impact development (LID). LID is an approach to land development that works to preserve a site's natural hydrological functions by protecting and enhancing native vegetation and soils, reducing impervious surface and managing stormwater at the sources. These techniques, where feasible, are well suited to development in rural residential zoned areas. LID is becoming an increasingly valuable tool for controlling polluted runoff that contributes to ~~((important in meeting the challenge of protecting))~~ declining ~~((and))~~ populations of federally protected aquatic species, meeting the requirements of the ~~((Municipal))~~ NPDES Municipal Stormwater Permit and ~~((in doing our part to))~~ protecting and restor(e)ing the regions streams, rivers, lakes, and the Puget Sound.

Additional policies on low impact development are located in Chapter 2. These policies also apply in the Rural Area.

**R-336**                      **King County shall work with residential builders and developers to encourage the use of low impact development practices, where feasible, that protect native vegetation and soils, restore disturbed soils, and reduce impervious surfaces. The purpose is to reduce flooding, erosion and sedimentation, prevent and mitigate habitat loss, enhance groundwater recharge, and prevent surface and ground water quality and degradation. King County shall continue to promote preservation of native vegetation and soils and restoration of disturbed soils on rural residential**

zoned parcels to the maximum extent ((~~practicable~~)) feasible. Dispersion of runoff from impervious surfaces into native vegetation in accordance with the Surface Water Design Manual is the preferred method of stormwater management in the Rural Area.

## IV. Rural Public Facilities and Service

The policies below set forth King County's general approach to providing services and setting facility standards for the Rural Area and provide guidance for siting those facilities that require Rural Area locations. See Chapter Seven, Transportation, and Chapter Eight, Services, Facilities and Utilities, for more detailed policies on specific facilities and services such as roads, on-site sewage treatment and disposal systems and water supply.

In order to focus growth within the Urban Growth Area, financial resources must be prioritized to develop and maintain sufficient urban infrastructure and services in the UGA to accommodate that growth. Further, the presence of a high level of public infrastructure and services has been demonstrated to create pressure for new growth. ~~((For example, the taxpayer-supported road network constructed in eastern King County over the last twenty to thirty years has been the greatest source of growth pressure in the rural and natural resources area.))~~ To use financial resources efficiently and reduce growth pressure in the Rural Area, King County will not provide an urban level of infrastructure and services to the Rural Area. Chapter Seven, Transportation and Chapter Eight, Services, Facilities and Utilities, clarify King County's priorities for transportation and other facility improvements in the rural and natural resource areas.

**R-401                      King County shall work with cities and other agencies providing services to the Rural Area to adopt standards for facilities and services in the Rural Area that protect basic public health and safety and the environment, but are financially supportable at rural densities and do not encourage urban development.**

**R-402                      Public spending priorities for facilities and services within the Rural Area should be as follows:**

- a.              First, to maintain existing facilities and services that protect public health and safety; and**
- b.              Second, to upgrade facilities and services when needed to correct level of service deficiencies without unnecessarily creating additional capacity for new growth.**

**R-403**

**In the Rural Area, standards and plans for utility service should be consistent with long-term, low-density development and resource industries. Utility facilities that serve the Urban Growth Area but must be located in the Rural Area (for example, a pipeline from a municipal watershed) should be designed and scaled to serve primarily the Urban Growth Area. Sewers needed to serve previously established urban “islands,” rural cities or Rural Towns, or new or existing public schools or public school facilities, shall be tightlined and have access restrictions precluding service to the Rural Area.**

## V. Rural Commerical Centers

This section addresses Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers, Rural Towns, Rural Cities, industrial uses in the Rural Area, and promoting public health in the Rural Area.

The Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers, Rural Towns, the rural cities, and non-resource industrial uses located in rural King County contribute to the vitality of the rural economy. Additionally, the Rural cities and Rural Towns provide variety in development patterns and housing choices and provide employment opportunities, retail shopping, and other services to nearby residents. These cities and towns also contain a significant portion of King County's historic architecture and are the primary locations for nonresidential uses in the Rural Area. The Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers provide limited, local convenience shopping, restaurants, and services to meet the daily needs of rural residents.

### A. Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers

Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers are small commercial developments, or in some cases, historic towns or buildings, that are too small to provide more than convenience shopping and services to surrounding residents. They generally do not have infrastructure or services such as water supply or sewage disposal systems any different from those serving the surrounding area. Examples of Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers include the store at Stillwater on the Carnation-Duvall Road, the town of Cumberland on the Enumclaw Plateau, and Preston. The county is implementing projects and exploring new options to ensure the continuation of the character and businesses in these important rural centers.

**R-501                      The Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers designated on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map are small-scale business areas that should provide convenience shopping and services for the surrounding community. No new Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers are needed to serve the Rural Area. Expansion of the boundaries of the existing Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers shall not be permitted except through the subarea plan process.**



The designated Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers shown on the Land Use map are:

<b>Bear Creek:</b>	Cottage Lake and Redmond-Fall City Road/236th NE
<b>East King County:</b>	Greenwater, Baring and Timberlane Village
<b>Enumclaw:</b>	Cumberland, Krain's Corner and Newaukum
<b>Newcastle:</b>	Coalfield and East Renton Plateau
<b>Snoqualmie:</b>	Preston and Stillwater
<b>Tahoma/Raven Heights:</b>	Maple Valley, Hobart, Ravensdale and North Cedar Grove Road
<b>Vashon:</b>	Burton, Dockton, Tahlequah, Portage, Heights Dock, Jack's Corner, Vashon Center, Vashon Service Center, Vashon Heights and Maury Island Service Center

The policies in this section are based on a recognition of the limited size of most Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers, the limited utilities and other services available to them, and a desire to preserve their existing character and relationship to the surrounding rural community.

**R-502** Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers should accommodate only small-scale retail, community and human services, and personal service uses that provide convenience shopping and services to nearby Rural Area residents. ~~((If land suitable for residential development is included within the boundaries of a Rural Neighborhood Commercial Center, it should be zoned for rural residential development consistent with the residential development policies of this plan.))~~

**R-503** King County should adopt commercial development standards for Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers that facilitate economic reuse of existing structures, minimize increases in impervious surfaces, and encourage retention of historic character and scale. Urban-level parking, landscaping, and street improvement standards are not appropriate for Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers except as demonstrated as being needed to address the safety of the public.

## **B. Rural Towns**

Rural Towns are unincorporated towns governed directly by King County, but may provide a focal point for community groups such as chambers of commerce or community councils to participate in public affairs.

The purposes of the Rural Town designation are to recognize existing concentrations of higher density and economic activity in the Rural Area, whether by virtue of historical rural settlements or redesignation of an urban commercial center; provide a physical focus for the historic identity of rural communities; and to allow for modest growth of residential and economic uses within these designations if supported by the community and adequate utilities and other public services are available. At the present time, the Rural Towns are Fall City, Snoqualmie Pass, and the Town of Vashon and are recognized as such within the Comprehensive Plan. The county supports the economic vitality of these communities and is offering programs and working with the businesses and residents impacted by these communities in to help ensure their continued economic health.

Although higher-density development in Rural Towns may require public sewers, applying the full range of urban development standards (e.g. for street improvements or landscaping) may not be necessary, and may not be consistent with the historic character of these communities. Although Rural Towns also may in some circumstances develop at densities similar to those in the Urban Growth Area or in rural cities, they are considered part of the Rural Area for purposes of the GMA, do not provide significant growth capacity, and are not subject to the growth targets adopted for the UGA.

**R-504                      King County hereby designates the Rural Towns of Fall City, Snoqualmie Pass, and the Town of Vashon as unincorporated Rural Towns. These historical settlements in unincorporated King County should provide services and a range of housing choices for Rural Area residents. The boundaries of the designated Rural Towns are shown on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map. Adjustments to these boundaries shall only occur through a subarea planning process, and shall not allow significant increases in development potential or environmental impacts. No new Rural Towns are needed to serve the Rural Area.**

**R-505** Commercial and industrial development that provides employment, shopping, and community and human services that strengthen the fiscal and economic health of rural communities should locate in Rural Towns if utilities and other services permit. Urban-level parking, landscaping, and street improvement standards are not appropriate for Rural Towns. Sidewalks and other pedestrian safety measures should be provided to serve the Rural Town.

**R-506** Rural Towns may contain higher-density housing than permitted in the surrounding Rural Area, and should provide affordable and resource-worker housing if utilities and other services permit. Development density in Rural Towns may approach that achieved in rural cities.

The policies in this section apply only to the unincorporated Rural Towns. King County encourages rural cities to adopt land use policies and development standards that protect and enhance their historical character.

**R-507** Rural Towns serve as activity centers for the Rural Area and may be served by range of utilities and services, and may include several or all of the following land uses, if supported by necessary utilities and other services and if scaled and designed to protect rural character:

- a. Retail, commercial and industrial uses to serve the surrounding Rural Area population and to provide support for resource industries and tourism;
- b. Residential development, including single-family housing on small lots as well as multifamily housing and mixed-use developments;
- c. Other commercial and industrial uses, including commercial recreation and light industry; and
- d. Public facilities and services such as community services, churches, schools, and fire stations.

**R-508** Sewers may be allowed in Rural Towns if necessary to solve existing water quality and public health problems which cannot be addressed by other methods, provided that any extension of sewer mains from urban areas to serve a Rural Town shall be

**tightlined systems designed to not serve any intervening lands. All alternatives shall be exhausted before sewers may be allowed. Rural Towns shall not be enlarged to facilitate provision of sewers.**

Rural and urban residents alike value the historic character of King County's Rural Towns. New development can enhance the character and valuable features of Rural Towns through careful design and location.

**R-509 Rural Towns should be compact, promoting pedestrian and nonmotorized travel while permitting automobile access to most commercial and industrial uses. New development should be designed to strengthen the desirable characteristics and the historic character of the town, be supported by necessary public facilities and services, and be compatible with historic resources and nearby rural or resource uses. New industrial uses should locate where they do not disrupt pedestrian or bicycle traffic in established retail areas of town or conflict with residential uses.**

## **C. Rural Cities**

King County's rural cities are incorporated areas whose local governments are involved in the region's planning processes on an equal legal basis with the suburban cities, Bellevue and Seattle. The incorporated rural cities are Black Diamond, Carnation, Duvall, Enumclaw, North Bend, Skykomish and Snoqualmie.

The Growth Management Act stipulates that rural cities and their Urban Growth Areas are to be treated as part of the Urban Growth Area. The Countywide Planning Policies also provide for urban land uses and densities and urban services in those locations. Excessive growth in rural cities and Rural Towns, however, may create pressure for extending urban services (for example, (~~roads~~) sewers) across the Rural Area or Resource Lands, may increase conversion pressure on nearby Resource Lands and adversely affect rural character. Therefore, King County views rural cities as qualitatively different from the Urban Growth Area as a whole, even though they may provide significant opportunities for residential or employment growth.

King County has worked with the rural cities to establish Urban Growth Areas to accommodate growth. These areas are shown as part of the Urban Growth Area on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map.

Additionally, the county is working with these cities on individual economic development strategies and options, as well as regional economic and tourism opportunities.

**R-510**                    **The rural(~~(, incorporated)~~) cities and their rural city Urban Growth Areas (~~(shall be)~~) are considered part of the overall Urban Growth Area for purposes of planning land uses and facility needs. King County should work with rural cities to encourage the provision of affordable housing, to minimize the impacts of new development on the surrounding rural land and to plan for growth consistent with long-term protection of significant historic resources, the surrounding Rural Area and Resource Lands.**

**R-511**                    **Within Rural City Urban Growth Areas, the following uses shall be permitted until the area annexes to the city:**

- a.        Residential development at a density of 1 home per 5 acres or less with mandatory clustering; and**
- b.        Nonresidential development such as commercial and industrial as determined through previous subarea plans.**

## **D.     Non-Resource Industrial Uses and Development Standards in the Rural Area**

There are (~~(two)~~) three existing industrial areas in the Rural Area containing multiple industrial uses on several sites. One is located within the southwest portion of the Town of Vashon, (~~(and it)~~) The second is a designated industrial area adjacent to the Rural Neighborhood Commercial Center of Preston. The Preston Industrial Area recognizes an existing concentration of industrial uses that contributes to the economic diversity of the Rural Area, but expansion of this industrial area beyond the identified boundaries is not permitted (see Countywide Planning Policy CP-942). (~~(One potential)~~) The third industrial area is located along SR-169 on lands that have been and continue to be used as for industrial purposes and have a designation as a King County Historic site(~~(that makes conversion to residential highly unlikely)~~)).

- R-512**                    The creation of new Industrial-zoned lands in the Rural Area shall be limited to those that have long been used for industrial purposes, do not have potential for conversion to residential use due to a historic designation and ~~((which))~~ that may be accessed directly from SR-169.
- R-513**                    Rural Public Infrastructure Maintenance Facilities, and agriculture and forestry product processing should be allowed in the Rural Area. Other new industrial uses in the Rural Area shall be permitted only in Rural Towns and in the designated industrial area adjacent to the Rural Neighborhood Commercial Center of Preston.

In order to preserve rural character and protect sensitive natural features, new rural industrial development needs to be of a scale and nature that is distinct from urban industrial development. The scale and intensity and many of the uses allowed in urban industrial development are not appropriate for rural industrial areas. The following policy applies to all new industrial development in the Rural Area.

- R-514**                    Development regulations for nonvested industrial development in the Rural Area shall require the following:
- a.        Greater setbacks, and reduced building height, floor/lot ratios, and maximum impervious surface percentage standards in comparison to standards for urban industrial development~~((-))~~;
  - b.        Maximum protection of sensitive natural features, especially salmonid habitat and water quality~~((-))~~;
  - c.        Building and landscape design that respects the aesthetic qualities and character of the Rural Area, and provides substantial buffering from the adjoining uses and scenic vistas~~((-))~~;
  - d.        Building colors and materials that are muted, signs that are not internally illuminated, and site and building lighting that is held to the minimum necessary for safety~~((-))~~;
  - e.        Heavier industrial uses, nonvested industrial uses producing substantial waste byproducts or wastewater discharge, or nonvested paper, chemical and allied products manufacturing uses in the urban industrial zone shall be prohibited~~((-))~~; and

- f. Industrial uses requiring substantial investments in infrastructure such as water, sewers or transportation facilities shall be scaled to avoid the need for public funding of the infrastructure.**

The intent of this policy is to preclude expansion of the industrial area beyond the identified boundaries and to ensure that new development (not previously constructed or vested) in the industrial area meets rural character standards. Site design, landscaping, design and construction of internal and access roads and building scale should reinforce the set boundaries and rural nature of the industrial area to further discourage future industrial expansion beyond the industrial boundary.

There are also existing, isolated industrial sites in the Rural Area which are recognized, but are not appropriate for new industrial uses. Further expansion of these isolated industrial uses is not encouraged, and therefore they are not zoned Industrial.

**R-515 Existing industrial uses in the Rural Area outside of Rural Towns, the industrial area on the King County-designated historic site along SR-169 or the designated industrial area adjacent to the Rural Neighborhood Commercial Center of Preston shall be zoned rural residential but may continue if they qualify as legal, nonconforming uses.**

## **E. Promoting Public Health in the Rural Area for All**

Planning and features of the built environment are important in providing healthy, safe places for people regardless of whether the setting is rural or urban. The built environment refers to various physical features, such as buildings, parks, and roadways, and their spatial arrangement in neighborhoods and communities. These features influence public health through the range of choices provided for engaging in various activities. For example, having a park or other gathering place to come together with family, friends, or community members can strengthen social and mental health and increase community cohesiveness. Also, roadway design influences vehicle speeds and, in the event of a crash or a collision, the injury severity and fatality rates for drivers and pedestrians. People with access to places to play are twice as likely to reach recommended levels of physical activity than those who have little or no access.

(See the Introduction and Chapter 2, Urban Communities for additional information on the linkages between the built environment and various aspects of health.)

Many locations in King County's rural cities, Rural Towns, and Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers function as important hubs for their respective communities because they provide shops and services. Often a park, school, or other public service is within walking distance of these community hubs but can't be safely reached. Opportunities for daily physical activity can be increased by establishing safe walking and bicycling connections to and within these rural hubs.

In addition to physical activity, another major determinant of health is what people eat. Everything from quality and location of food retail outlets and restaurants to food cost to school food choices influence the food choices of rural residents. According to recent USDA figures and research from the American Dietetic Association, almost 80 percent of adults are not eating the recommended levels of fruits and vegetables. There are people in every community for whom hunger is a daily issue. Land use planning can play a role in providing and improving access to healthy foods. Garden plots located in neighborhoods, parks, vacant lots, surplus public rights-of-way, and public utility lands in various communities can be used as places to grow fruits and vegetables, build community, and address hunger. Similar locations in the Rural Area of King County should be explored for this purpose.

**R-516                    Within Rural Towns and larger Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers, ((Non))  
non-motorized connectivity, where consistent with rural character, should be  
encouraged to promote walking and bicycling and to improve public health ((within  
Rural Towns and larger Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers)).**

**R-517                    King County should explore ways of creating and supporting community gardens,  
farmers' markets, produce stands and other similar community based food growing  
projects to provide and improve access to healthy food for all rural residents.**



## VI. Resource Lands

### A. Ensuring Conservation and Productive Use of Resource Lands

King County's Natural Resource Lands contribute to the economic prosperity of the region; they are the lands ((are those)) with long-term commercial significance for farming, forestry, and minerals. ~~Products from Resource Lands play an important role in our economy by~~ Businesses that rely on resource lands provide providing jobs and products, raw materials such as food, wood, and gravel. ((, and by providing)) ~~They also are an important part of ((links to))~~ our cultural heritage. Responsible stewardship of resource lands produces multiple environmental benefits, such as:

- Stream and salmon protection;
- Clean air and water;
- Wildlife habitat;
- Flood risk reduction;
- Groundwater recharge and protection; and
- Carbon sequestration and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

King County has taken major steps to conserve and manage agricultural soils and activities, forestry and mining opportunities. Resource Lands and the industries they support are conserved by encouraging development to occur primarily in the Urban Growth Area as directed by the GMA. Under this plan, Resource Lands, including designated Agricultural Production Districts, the Forest Production District and sites of long-term commercial significance for resource uses, will have minimal new residential and commercial development. New development that does occur will be designed to be compatible with active resource-based uses.

This chapter contains King County's strategy for conservation of these valuable Resource Lands and for encouraging their productive and sustainable management. The strategy consists of policies to guide planning, incentives, education, regulation and purchase or transfer of development rights.

Forest, farm and mineral lands are not King County's only natural resources. Many other resource-based industries, such as the fisheries industry, are influenced by King County's land use and planning policies. Policies for the protection and enhancement of air, water, vegetation, fisheries, wildlife and other natural resources can be found in Chapter Four, Environment.

The Rural Forest Commission was established in 1997 to represent the diversity of forest interests in King County. The Commission reviews the development and implementation of strategies, programs, policies and regulations that benefit forestry and advises the county on ways to preserve rural forests and promote rural forestry.

**R-601                    The Rural Forest Commission shall advise the King County Executive and Council on the development of innovative programs, policies and regulations that benefit forestry and that encourage the retention of the forest land base in King County. King County shall continue to support the Rural Forest Commission with staff and other resources.**

In 1994, the Agriculture Commission was established as a forum for farmers to take an active role in land use decisions, policies and regulations affecting commercial agriculture. The commission solicits input from agricultural agency technical advisors and others with land use and technical expertise, as well as other affected groups. ~~((such as the Dairy Federation, tribes, and project proponents.))~~

**R-602                    The Agriculture Commission shall advise the King County Executive and Council on agricultural issues and programs, including, but not limited to:**

- a.       Existing and proposed legislation and regulations affecting commercial agriculture;**
- b.       Land use issues ~~((as they impact))~~ that affect agriculture; and**
- c.       Ways to maintain, enhance and promote agriculture and agricultural products in the region.**

**King County shall continue to support the Agriculture Commission with staff and other resources.**

As the population in the Puget Sound area continues to grow, the protection of resource lands and the continued success of commercial agriculture and forestry is a regional challenge. Many of the issues facing King County's resource industries are also faced by neighboring counties. Furthermore, some of the infrastructure and support businesses necessary to agriculture and forestry may serve more than a single county. Therefore, King County's efforts to retain healthy resource economies will be more successful if the county collaborates with other agencies and community organizations in the region. These efforts may include policy development, training for service providers and outreach that is supportive of commercial agriculture and timber production and encourages the purchase of local food and local wood.

**R-603                      King County should work with other ((~~counties~~)) jurisdictions, agencies and community organizations to help maintain and enhance commercial agriculture and forestry by addressing challenges common across the region.**

## **((A-)) B.      Resource Conservation Strategy**

In 1985, the King County Comprehensive Plan designated five Agricultural Production Districts and the Forest Production District. Subsequent planning efforts established minimum lot sizes and uses for these districts and their surrounding areas. These land use regulations are consistent with the requirements of the GMA to designate productive lands and to plan for adjacent and nearby land uses compatible with long-term commercial farming and forestry. GMA requires designation of agricultural and forest lands of long-term commercial significance. Agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance are designated as Agricultural Production Districts and forest lands of long-term commercial significance are designated as the Forest Production District as shown on the Agricultural and Forest Lands Map.

The GMA also requires designation of mineral resource lands that have long-term significance for the extraction of minerals. Such lands are shown as Designated Mineral Resource Sites on the Mineral Resources Map in this chapter. The role of the Forest Production District in the conservation of mineral resources is also explained below.

- R-604**                    **King County shall promote and support forestry, agriculture, mining and other resource-based industries as a part of a diverse, regional and sustainable economy.**
- R-605**                    **Well-managed forestry and agriculture practices are encouraged because of their multiple benefits, including natural resource protection.**
- R-606**                    **Farm lands, forest lands and mineral resources shall be conserved for productive use through the use of Designated Agricultural and Forest Production Districts and Designated Mineral Resource Sites where the principal and preferred land uses will be commercial resource management activities, and by the designation of appropriate compatible uses on adjacent rural and urban lands.**
- R-607**                    **Land uses, utilities and transportation facilities adjacent to Designated Agricultural and Forest Production Districts and Designated Mineral Resource Sites, shall be sited and designed to ensure compatibility with resource management.**
- R-608**                    **King County should encourage infrastructure and services that support resource lands management and resource-based businesses. These should be sited in close proximity to designated Agricultural and Forest Production Districts and Designated Mineral Resource Sites when adverse impacts and incompatibilities can effectively be mitigated.**

King County recognizes that maintaining viable resource-based businesses is challenging. Owners of resource lands make substantial investments in managing their land. Market uncertainties, labor costs, vandalism, taxes and fees can affect the profitability of resource-based industries.

Conflicts with surrounding land uses and environmental problems can arise even with the best of precautions. Resource-based industries need reasonable certainty that operations can continue if activities are performed in an environmentally sound manner.

~~((Forest lands and farms provide valuable materials and employment as well as other important functions and values, such as community character, open space and wildlife habitat. These benefits are~~

~~not without associated costs. Owners of resource lands make substantial investments in managing their land. Taxes, fees, labor costs, costs associated with vandalism and market uncertainties can adversely affect the profitability of resource-based industries.))~~

The Forest Lands Program (RCW 84.33), and the Open Space Taxation Program, which includes the Timberland and Public Benefit Rating System programs (RCW 84.34) are property tax incentives that encourage continued farm and forest management both within and outside the Forest Production District and Agricultural Production Districts.

**R-609                      King County should expand access to property tax incentive programs to encourage landowners to continue practicing farming and forestry and to help ensure retention of the resource land base. These programs should be publicized and marketed.**

**R-610                      King County shall employ a variety of innovative programs and incentives to help maintain and enhance resource-based industries.**

Examples of such ~~((techniques))~~ programs include ~~((implementation of a TDR program,))~~ technical assistance and education for sustainable land management, ~~((expanded))~~ education for urban and suburban residents, ~~((expanded))~~ purchases of land or development rights, transfer of development rights (TDR), the purchase of scenic easements and other less-than-fee-ownership interests that conserve resource uses, establishment of buffers and setbacks for adjacent properties, and relief from special levies and local improvement district fees.

When urban development occurs near Resource Lands, conflicts can result. Examples of such conflicts are greater risk of forest fires; vandalism to logging, farm and mining equipment; destruction of young trees; and increased mixing of heavy truck and residential traffic, which presents safety problems. Increased development near resource lands also results in increased encroachment of noxious weeds into forests and farmland. ~~For these reasons, resource management in or near developed areas often is more costly.~~ It is important for neighboring property owners to understand the value of resource industries and what kinds of resource activities are likely to occur.

- R-611**                    **King County should develop and employ effective means to inform affected property owners about nearby resource management activities. This may include, but not be limited to:**
- Notice on title for properties within five hundred feet of designated agriculture, forestry, and ~~((mining))~~ mineral resource lands;**
- Signage; and**
- Community meetings and other public notification tools.**

Successful Resource Land conservation requires a regional perspective and intergovernmental cooperation. Although the designated Resource Lands are located in unincorporated King County, they benefit nearby cities and can be affected by activities in those cities. Furthermore, some Resource Lands in King County ~~((include privately owned lands as well as lands))~~ are owned and/or managed by city, county, state and federal agencies and tribes. ~~((In addition, a))~~ Another reason for a regional perspective is that many resource activities are regulated or supported by ~~((a variety of))~~ state and federal programs. ~~((regulations apply to some resource maintenance, harvesting and extraction operations. Resource conservation efforts, therefore, require a regional perspective and intergovernmental cooperation.))~~

- R-612**                    **King County shall work cooperatively with cities, tribes, other public agencies, private utilities, resource managers, land owners and citizens to conserve public and private Resource Lands for long-term productivity and environmental protection in a consistent and predictable manner.**
- R-613**                    **Designated Forest and Agricultural Production District lands shall not be annexed by cities.**
- R-614**                    **King County should establish written agreements with agencies, tribes and other affected parties whose close coordination and collaboration are essential to effective implementation of resource management programs. Such agreements should serve to establish consensus and commitment to achieving specific resource management goals and to define the specific roles and responsibilities of each agency.**

**R-615                    King County should avoid duplication of federal and state regulations that apply to resource-based industries. However, King County reserves the authority to address issues of local concern with regard to resource-based activities and operations.**

A resource management strategy that protects the environment is necessary to maintain the long-term productivity of the resource. Chapter Four, Environment, describes the value of using an integrated, ecosystem-based approach to natural resource and environmental planning and management. This approach, along with sound operational practices by resource-based industries, may be able to prevent or minimize environmental impacts associated with resource harvesting and extraction.

**R-616                    Resource-based industries should use practices that protect the long-term integrity of the natural and built environment, adjacent land uses, and cultural resources that maintain the long-term productivity of the resource base. Resource industry practices should result in maintenance of ecosystem health and habitat.**

**R-617                    Habitat protection requirements should not fall disproportionately on land maintained in agriculture or forestry, and the costs of such protection shall not be disproportionately placed on the owners of such land.**

**R-618                    King County should be a leader in resource management by demonstrating environmentally sound agriculture and forestry on county-owned land.**

**R-619                    King County shall ~~((provide for integrated))~~ include resource education through its signs on trail ~~((and sign))~~ systems that are linked with working farms, forests, and mines. Interpretation should:**

- a.        Provide historical perspective;**
- b.        Demonstrate current adaptive resource management practices (forestry, fisheries, wildlife, agriculture); and**
- c.        Explain economics of various resource uses.**

## **~~((B-))~~ C. Forestry**

King County forestlands provide local, regional and national benefits that are basic to our quality of life. In addition to supplying a variety of wood and other products, forests emit oxygen, supply pure water, reduce risks from flooding and soil erosion, enhance groundwater recharge, provide habitat for innumerable plant and animal species, and offer scenic vistas and recreational opportunities.

Conservation of the extensive forests in the county saves the region millions of dollars by reducing the need for costly infrastructure for stormwater and flood control, water treatment, and air quality remediation. King County's forests provide employment in forestry, wood, paper, recreation, and tourism industries. In sum, properly managed forests are fundamental to a healthy, diverse economy and environment.

The growth in human population has resulted in the loss of forestlands through conversion to non-forest uses. Increasing demands are being placed upon the remaining forest land base to provide goods, recreational opportunities and ecological functions. Climate change has the potential to put additional stress on forest lands due to changes in seasonal temperature fluctuations, rainfall patterns, and distribution of insect populations. In the next ten to twenty years, Pacific Northwest forests are expected to face increasing drought mortality, difficulty in getting seedlings established, and severity of forest fires. To address these challenges, forest managers are embracing more broad-based management methods and strategies that encompass ecosystems, landscapes and watersheds, while continually incorporating new scientific information to improve these approaches. Their efforts, together with the collective foresight and dedication of landowners, interest groups, tribes, citizens and agencies, are needed to ensure that King County's forests continue to contribute to a sustainable way of life for present and future generations.

The first step to maintain and enhance commercial forestry is to protect the forest land base. Second, encourage an ecosystem approach to forest management that provides for long-term ecosystem health and productivity and addresses cumulative impacts on non-timber resources. Third, commercial forestry must be supported and encouraged by minimizing land use conflicts and offering incentives.



## 1. Protecting Forest Lands

The purpose of the Forest Production District (FPD) is to conserve large blocks of commercially valuable forestland for the long term. The designation and zoning is designed to prevent intrusion of incompatible uses, manage adjacent land uses to minimize land use conflicts, and prevent or discourage conversion from forestry to other uses. ((to nonforestry-based uses.)) A comparison of the area of forestland converted since 1987 inside the FPD with the area converted outside the district indicates that designation and zoning of commercial forest lands help to discourage subdivision and conversion.

Sixty percent of the land area in King County is within the designated FPD. The FPD comprises 1,300 square miles (825,000 acres) of forestland in east King County. Most of this land is held in large blocks of contiguous ownership. At this larger scale, it is easier to manage for multiple purposes such as habitat and long-term forest health.

Although it has declined from its height in the late 1980's, commercial timber harvest remains a significant economic activity in King County. At the same time, forest management strategies have become more diverse and may include objectives for forest health, biodiversity, and wildlife habitat instead of timber production alone. Likewise, economic activity related to recreation, traditional cultural practices and aesthetics may be included in commercial forestry activities.

**R-620                      The FPD shall remain in large blocks of contiguous forest lands where the primary land use is commercial forestry. Other resource industry uses, such as mining and agriculture, should be permitted within the FPD when managed to be compatible with forestry.**

**R-621                      The FPD is a long-term designation. Lands may be removed from the FPD only through a subarea planning process, and only to recognize areas with historical retail commercial uses.**

About 70% of the FPD is in public ownership: parts of the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, including wilderness areas, state and county parks, Washington State Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) lands, and watersheds for the cities of Seattle and Tacoma. Public land management affects the

region's economy, recreation, wildlife habitat, forest health, stream flows, water supply, flood control and climate change mitigation capabilities.

For example, in the last two decades, there have been significant changes in how forest lands in the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest are managed. In King County, over 350,000 acres are within the national forest. Management emphasis has shifted from commodity timber production (in the 1960s 70s, and 80s) to custodial management with an emphasis on public recreation. The Forest Service has struggled to keep pace with the increasing demand for recreation infrastructure and to maintain access roads. Timber harvest levels have declined to less than 5% of those in the 1980s. The supply of forest products from the national forest is important to the regional viability of the forestry industry. There is currently a significant forest health issue on the Mount Baker Snoqualmie National Forest. Many previously harvested areas are overstocked with conifers that block sunlight from reaching the forest floor, resulting in a decline in species diversity and a lack of forage for animals. Forest fire suppression since the early 1900s has resulted in abnormally high fuel levels on the forest floor, which can increase the severity of wildfires.

Much of the 93,000 acres of forestland managed by WDNR in King County are trust lands that raise income from the sale of timber and other resources, and also provide wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities. In January 1997 WDNR made a far-reaching commitment to protect native animal and fish species through a federally approved Habitat Conservation Plan that covers about 1.6 million acres of WDNR-managed trust land forests—mostly in Western Washington. In 2007, WDNR initiated Forest Stewardship Council certification on state forest land located in the South Puget Sound Region, including part of Tiger Mountain near Issaquah and state-owned forestland near Enumclaw in King County.

**R-622                      King County recognizes the many values provided by the public forestland in the county, and encourages continued responsible forest management on these lands. King County should collaborate with other public land managers in planning for the conservation, use, and management of forest resources on public lands.**

The FPD includes approximately 250,000 acres in private ownership, most of which is commercial forestland. County policies are intended to maintain and facilitate commercial forestry in the FPD. The policies in this section allow for very limited residential uses in the designated FPD, consistent with the

objective of continuing forestry as the primary land use. For example, residences may be appropriate to permit forest managers to live on their land. King County zoning and subdivision regulations establish a large parcel size to promote efficient forest operations and to reduce incompatible residential development. Although the zoning calls for an 80-acre minimum lot size, many smaller lots were created prior to application of the zoning. Proliferation of residences in the FPD makes commercial forestry less viable.

**R-623                      King County is committed to maintaining working forestland in the FPD, and shall continue to work with landowners and other stakeholders to promote forestry, reduce uses and activities that conflict with resource uses and recognize forestland values.**

**R-624                      To reduce conflicts with resource uses, a forest management plan shall be required as a condition of development for any residential uses in the FPD. Accessory dwelling units shall not be allowed in the FPD.**

**R-625                      Structures within the FPD should be sited to maintain the productivity of the district. Site plan requirements should limit impervious surface, provide for fire control, protect domestic water supply and prevent conflicts with forest management.**

In 2004, King County purchased the development rights on the 90,000 acre Snoqualmie Forest. This purchase conserves the forest land base for the long term while supporting the continuation of commercial forest production. It is important that the county consider its responsibility to protect the long-term commercial significance of the FPD in its efforts to conserve land within the district.

**R-626                      King County should conserve working forests and should encourage private forestry through the acquisition of development rights in the FPD. Land acquisition proposals that would remove lands from forest management should be evaluated to ensure that the long-term commercial significance of the FPD is not compromised.**

Although there is considerable acreage in commercial forestry in King County, there are no major lumber mills still in operation. There are a few small mills in the county, but they have limited capacity. As a result, small landowners have few options for marketing their logs, and usually have a long haul to the closest mill. The county should work with forest landowners and forestry business to better understand and address the barriers to local wood processing.

**R-627                      King County should promote and support production, harvest, utilization, and marketing of wood products grown in the county's ~~((R))~~rural and forest areas. King County should ~~((encourage))~~ ensure that regulations applying to rural and forest areas do not discourage the establishment of sawmills and other wood product businesses and services ~~((that are able to serve the small forest landowners in the county))~~.**

King County can further protect commercial forestlands and prevent conflicts by working with other public agencies and service providers to consolidate lands and to locate infrastructure facilities to prevent or minimize intrusions. Such actions can also improve the owner's capacity to protect fish and wildlife habitat and other natural resources.

**R-628                      In consultation with tribes and other affected agencies and landowners, King County should support land trades that result in consolidated forest ownership and work with forest managers to identify and develop other incentives for continued forestry.**

**R-629                      King County opposes the establishment or expansion of special purpose taxing districts and local improvement districts in the FPD, and shall not grant new or expanded franchises for utilities in the FPD, unless demonstrated that they directly benefit forestry or are necessary for transmission of power or water.**

Forest lands have tremendous recreational and aesthetic value. For example, FPD lands are included within the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway along the I-90 corridor. Opportunities for hiking and other forms of outdoor recreation exist within the working forests that are part of the Greenway. Access to Resource Lands must be carefully managed, however, to prevent conflict with natural resource goals.

For example, open gate policies allowing public access may be incompatible with fish and wildlife protection goals and sometimes may interfere with forestry operations by risking such activities as garbage dumping, vandalism and timber theft. In the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, a variety of federal partnerships and volunteer programs help to better connect urban dwellers with the forest while providing ecological benefits.

**R-630                      Public and private forest owners are encouraged to provide for recreational, educational and cultural uses when compatible with forest protection.**

Recreational and institutional developments, such as conference centers, ski areas and associated hotels, allow more people to enjoy the aesthetic benefits of forest lands. Such facilities are acceptable if located in areas of existing development, such as Snoqualmie Pass, and if their operation and use are restricted adequately to minimize conflict with resource lands. Major recreational or institutional development sites can adversely affect the FPD because they reduce the forest land base and conflict with other resource management goals.

**R-631                      No master planned resorts shall be permitted in the FPD. New or expansion of existing recreational or institutional uses in the FPD may be permitted if compatible with long-term forestry, the interests of tribes and other resource management goals.**

## **2.       Promoting Forest Management**

WDNR regulates forestry through the Forest Practices Act. If the forest practice is associated with a conversion from forestry to another use on the property, such as development, the county has jurisdiction, and the county's development regulations must be followed. On rural properties, it is typical that a landowner will combine a long-term forest use on one part of the property with a residence on another part of the property. It is in the interest of the county to ensure that development regulations are followed for the permanent clearing for development, but also to regulate the long-term forest parts of the property with regulations appropriate for forest harvest.

**R-632** King County should continue to work with all affected parties and the WDNR to improve the enforcement of forest practice regulations in the Rural Area, and to ensure that landowners comply with county regulations when they are converting portions of a site to a non-forest use. Harvesting of forest lands for the purpose of converting to non-forest uses shall meet all applicable county standards for clearing and critical areas management. Landowners opting to conduct forest management activities under state approved forest practices permits should be restricted from developing those areas for non-forestry purposes for six years from the date of forest practice approval. Recognizing that some landowners combine the development of a residence on a portion of the property with long-term forestry on the rest, the county should provide flexibility in its regulations to address the residential development differently from the forest management.

**R-633** King County should ensure that regulations applying to forest practices do not discourage forest management on properties in long-term forestry. Forestry should be regulated consistent with best management practices in the Forest Practices Act. The county should work to simplify its regulatory processes related to forest management.

**R-633a** The county should promote public understanding of the benefits of commercial timber production and encourage the use of local wood.

King County has worked with state, federal, and private landowners on multiparty resource plans, such as the Middle Fork Snoqualmie Plan, the plan for Rattlesnake Ridge, and numerous watershed planning efforts. There will continue to be opportunities for interagency cross-ownership cooperation, which will result in improved resource management and conservation.

**R-634** Working with public and private forest land managers, King County shall encourage long-term forest productivity and the protection of land and water resources by participating in collaborative, multiownership planning efforts.

**R-635                    King County promotes forest management that achieves long-term forest health; protection of watersheds, critical areas and habitat to support fish and wildlife populations; protection of threatened and endangered species; conservation and economic viability of working forests; carbon sequestration and reduction in green house gas emissions; and adaptation to climate change.**

In 2005, King County worked with the Tolt Triangle community near Carnation, assisting with the formation of Tolt Triangle Fire Council and the development of their comprehensive community wildfire protection plan. The 500 rural residences on 5,800 acres covered by the plan became the first area in King County to earn the status of “Firewise Community” from the national Firewise Program. ~~((The county also developed best management practices recommended for implementing wildfire protection for residences in forested areas.))~~ Since 2005, additional communities in forested areas have adopted wildfire protection plans. The county provides ~~((Education))~~ training and technical assistance regarding fire planning ~~((is offered))~~ and best management practices for implementing wildfire protection throughout forested areas of King County with a focus in the foothill areas ~~((of eastern King County))~~ prone to east winds.

**R-636                    King County should encourage community fire planning so that residents are aware of the dangers of forest fires and take steps to make their properties less vulnerable. King County should support neighborhood-based efforts to manage forests to improve forest health and reduce the risk of wildfire.**

**R-637                    King County shall encourage the development of private/public partnerships that provide incentives for landowners to practice innovative, fish-friendly forestry and that can help ensure retention of the forest resource land base in perpetuity.**

An example of such a partnership is the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway Biosolids Forestry Program, which includes King County, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, the Greenway Trust, the University of Washington and ~~((the Weyerhaeuser Company))~~ Hancock Forest Management. One of the elements of this program involves the acquisition of forestlands that are vulnerable to residential and commercial development. Lands are acquired by a combination of county funds and federal Forest Legacy funds and then transferred to the WDNR for management. By deed, these lands stay in forest

resource use in perpetuity and are managed according to the state's Habitat Conservation Plan. Seventy-five percent of all revenues generated are returned to King County. The lands that have been acquired help to form the block of public ownership along I-90, providing wildlife corridors, opportunities for trails and recreation, and the water quality protection provided by forest cover.

In addition to landscape-level planning and analysis, resource managers should identify specific areas in their forest ownership that are degraded or negatively impacting aquatic resources. Examples of such areas are logging roads or gravel mines no longer needed and scheduled to be abandoned or riparian zones that are not sufficiently vegetated. Organic soil amendments, when properly used, can greatly enhance vegetative growth and restore productivity to these sites, thus protecting fish and other aquatic resources. The use of recycled organic wastes generated in King County closes the recycling "loop" and helps us sustain the productivity of our resource lands.

**R-638                      King County encourages the use of recycled, organic-based soil amendments, such as biosolids, and fertilizers in forest ecosystems, which can reduce erosion and sedimentation into streams, increase water-holding capacity of soils, stimulate the growth of trees and other vegetation and enhance fish and wildlife habitat. King County shall work with the general public and private and public forestland owners to encourage the selective and appropriate use of these materials for ecosystem enhancement and restoration.**

One of the most successful efforts is the use of the county's biosolids to fertilize public and private forests ~~((and help restore old logging roads)). ((During the past three years))~~ Annually, about 1,400 ~~((4,000))~~ acres of forestland in east King County ~~((were))~~ are fertilized with biosolids. ~~((In the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway road restoration program, volunteers from many local youth and environmental groups, including Earthcorps, assisted in projects to remove logging roads by restoring the natural slope of the land, planting trees, and using compost to speed vegetation growth.))~~

Maintaining land in long-term forest use ~~((can mitigate))~~ offsets greenhouse gas emissions through sequestration of carbon in growing trees and in forest soils. Efforts to conserve forests and encourage forest management for health and resilience are a major means of implementing King County's climate change policies. Even with these and other efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, forests in the



Pacific Northwest face potential impacts from climate change. In the coming decades, mortality of trees and plants is projected to increase due to insects and pathogens, increased temperature, and lack of groundwater in the summer. Climate change also is projected to affect the composition and density of plant and animal species and the severity and frequency of forest fires. All of these potential impacts underscore the need for monitoring of climate-induced changes and active management of forest health.

**R-639                      King County should continue to collaborate with the University of Washington, Washington State University including Extension, state and federal agencies, and forest landowners to monitor and evaluate impacts of climate change on forests in King County.**

**R-640                      King County should consider climate change impacts and take steps to improve forest health and resilience to climate change impacts through its technical assistance to forest land owners, management of county-owned forest lands, and support of neighborhood-based efforts to reduce risks from wildfires.**

## **C.     Agriculture**

Land suitable for farming is an irreplaceable natural resource. Agricultural lands and farming provide many benefits to the citizens of King County including a connection to our cultural heritage, fresh local foods, and a diverse economy. In ~~((2002))~~ 2007, farmers in King County produced over ~~(((\$94))~~ \$127 million in agricultural sales. ~~((The majority of the food produced in King County is fruits and vegetables that are consumed locally.))~~ Farmlands are an intrinsic component of the varied open space landscape of the region. Farmland provides scenic vistas and low-density separation between rural communities. Many farms in the county include an educational experience through U-Pick operations, harvest tours, and demonstrations of agricultural practices. Agricultural lands also provide environmental benefits, including habitat for birds and other wildlife, large areas without impervious surfaces, and opportunities for providing riparian vegetation along rivers and streams.

The concern about the loss of farmland in King County came to a height in the 1970s and resulted in the successful Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) bond issue in 1979, which has funded the purchase of

farmland development rights on over 13,000 acres. In 1985, the county first designated its Agricultural Production Districts (APDs), which have remained stable since then at more than 41,000 (~~about 42,000~~) acres. However, despite the land conservation accomplished through the (~~Farmland Preservation Program (FPP)~~) FPP and the designation of the APDs, not all of this land is farmed. Based on a 2009 ~~2006~~ survey, approximately 24,000 (~~23,000~~) acres of the (~~42,000 acres designated as~~) APDs are being actively farmed. A 2003 survey of the Rural Area identified an additional 25,000 acres in active agriculture outside the APDs.

This section focuses on the county's efforts to maintain and enhance commercial agriculture for the value of local produce, dairy products, specialty horticultural and energy crops, keeping livestock, and for scenic and historic values. To meet the GMA requirement to maintain and enhance agriculture, a variety of methods and programs continue to be necessary. The policies call for King County to:

- Protect productive farmland by designation and zoning;
- Limit development to appropriately-scaled uses that are necessary to support commercial agriculture;
- Prevent or minimize land use conflicts between farming operations and adjacent land uses;
- Encourage and allow necessary infrastructure and services (markets, water, affordable housing, supply stores, technical services, tax incentives) that support commercial agriculture and contribute to growing, storing, processing, and distributing a local food supply and other horticultural and livestock activities;
- Acknowledge and support the connections between the food system, particularly food production, as it relates to providing King County residents with food choices that would allow them to meet dietary guidelines for fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products, and whole grains;
- (~~Encourage development practices that~~) Continue to preserve farmland and develop additional mechanisms to maintain the affordability of farmland; and
- Encourage farming practices that conserve soils and protect water quality, fisheries, and wildlife.

## 1. Protecting Agricultural Lands

In 1979, voters approved a \$50 million ballot measure to protect farmland threatened by development. The FPP became the first voter-approved measure in the nation to protect farmland in a metropolitan area. By purchasing the development rights, the FPP keeps farmland open and available through covenants that restrict development and limit the uses of the property to (~~properties' uses exclusively~~

~~for~~) agriculture and open space. The covenants (~~((“run”))~~ remain with the land(~~((“”))~~) in perpetuity so the land is protected regardless of ownership. Under the FPP, the county holds (~~((owns))~~) the development rights in trust (~~((; however,))~~ while the lands remain in the private ownership of over 200 property owners. The county cannot sell or remove its interest in FPP lands with the exception of conveying public road or utility easements.

In 1995, the county approved an additional \$3 million (~~((to))~~ for the purchase of additional development rights under the FPP, and continues to add to the program with a variety of grant funding. (~~((The county is approaching the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the FPP; to))~~) To date, (~~((it))~~ the FPP has succeeded in preserving over 13,200 acres of farmland. (~~((for the generations of today and tomorrow.))~~)

**R-641                      King County shall continue to implement the objectives of the Farmland Preservation Program (FPP). Protection of property purchased under the FPP shall be a high priority when balancing conflicting interests such as locating transportation, active recreation or utility facilities. King County shall use of the Transfer of Development Rights Program as another tool to preserve farmland.**

Agriculture is most productive in agricultural communities where neighbors support agriculture, where parcels are large enough for commercial agriculture and where labor, supplies and markets for farm products are available. King County's farm soils and most profitable farms are usually found in contiguous blocks with few nonagricultural uses. In 1985, King County established Agriculture Production Districts (APDs) with large lot zoning and (~~((specifying))~~) agriculture as the preferred use (~~((in these areas))~~).

The APDs, shown on the Agriculture and Forest Lands Map in this chapter, present the least number of land use conflicts for agriculture, contain agricultural support activities and provide the best environment for farming in King County. The five APDs are (~~((the))~~) Sammamish Valley, (~~((the))~~) Snoqualmie Valley, (~~((the))~~) Lower Green River Valley, (~~((the))~~) Upper Green River Valley and (~~((the))~~) Enumclaw Plateau. Most of the farmlands preserved under the FPP are found in these APDs.

**R-642                      Agriculture Production Districts (APDs) are blocks of contiguous farmlands where agriculture is supported through the protection of agricultural soils and related**

support services and activities. Roads and natural features are appropriate boundaries for APDs to reduce the possibility of conflicts with adjacent land uses.

**R-643** King County should continue to seek funding and purchase additional development rights to farmland in the APDs. ~~as funding becomes available.~~

Livestock, dairy and large-scale commercial row-crop operations require large parcels of land to allow for production ((which)) that is profitable and sustainable. Generally, at least 35 acres is needed for full-time wholesale commercial production of such products. Specialty agricultural products, products that are direct-marketed, and part-time farming enterprises generally do not need as much ((need less)) acreage to be profitable.

**R644** All parcels within the boundaries of an APD should be zoned Agricultural, either A-10 or A-35.

**R645** Lands within APDs should remain in parcels large enough for commercial agriculture. A residential density of one home per 35 acres shall be applied where the predominant lot size is 35 acres or larger, and a residential density of one home per 10 acres shall be applied where the predominant lot size is ((less)) smaller than 35 acres.

**R-646** Agriculture should be the principal land use in the APDs. Permanent new construction within districts shall be sited to prevent conflicts with commercial farming or other agricultural uses, and nonagricultural uses shall be limited. New development shall not disrupt agriculture operations and shall have a scale compatible with an active farming district.

**R-647** On-site housing for farm employees shall be allowed where this can be accomplished without unnecessarily removing land from agricultural use or conflicting with other public interests. King County should ((develop guidelines to allow on-site housing for farm employees, including guidelines that account for the

**restrictive covenants on properties in the FPP)) address the regulatory constraints that make it difficult for farmers to offer housing for farm employees.**

~~((Some of the highest quality salmon habitat in King County is found within APDs. Additional protection or restoration of critical habitat within the APDs has been recommended by each of the Water Resources Inventory Area Salmon Conservation Plans. Protection and enhancement of existing salmon habitat is a resource-based land use that should be included in all farm management plans. Specific habitat protection rules should not jeopardize the agricultural productivity within APDs. Aquatic habitat restoration or wetland mitigation projects should be limited in scale to achieve the objectives of the project while limiting fragmentation of farms and aquatic habitat. Many habitat restoration projects can be designed in a manner that provides benefits to both fish habitat and the agricultural landowner.))~~

The river valleys in King County are critical locations for agriculture, salmon habitat and natural floodplain processes. Many of these river valleys have been protected for long-term commercial agriculture, thereby preventing their conversion to other uses that are often incompatible with habitat protection or would require expensive flood risk reduction projects. These same river valleys are also some the last best places for salmon restoration, in part due to the limitations on development because of their designation as Agriculture Production Districts (APD.), and in part due to the fact that the recovery of listed salmon is dependent on the restoration of habitat conditions which are located in particular river reaches often within the APDs. King County supports the federal and state plans for recovery of salmon habitat and recognizes that there are times when a habitat restoration project must be located in active agricultural area. At the same time King County is committed to the preservation of productive agricultural soils and local agricultural production and protection of public safety in flood prone areas through the restoration of floodplain processes. King County's commitment to local agricultural production includes a variety of actions, for example provision of technical assistance for drainage maintenance and farm pads; and cost shares to assist farmers in meeting environmental regulations for water quality, and other similar programs. In recognition of potentially competing interests in these important areas, King County seeks to balance the goals of optimizing agricultural production, salmon habitat, and flood risk reduction recognizing that agriculture must remain the predominate use within the APDs.

Aquatic habitat restoration projects (~~((or floodplain restoration))~~) flood risk reduction projects are allowed (~~((on agricultural lands that are unsuitable for direct agricultural production purposes, such as portions of property that have not historically been farmed due to soil conditions or frequent flooding, and which cannot be returned to productivity by drainage maintenance, or where the proposed project would result in a net benefit to agricultural productivity. Agriculture must))~~) in an APD only if agriculture remains the predominant use in the same APD((s)) and (~~((these))~~) the project((s shall)) does not reduce the ability to farm in the (~~((area))~~) same APD. (~~((Such))~~) Aquatic habitat restoration projects (~~((may only be allowed on agricultural lands when there are no other suitable lands available and the project is supported by landowners who would be impacted by the project and when:~~

- a. ~~\_\_\_\_\_ The project is included in an approved Water Resources Inventory Area Plan, Farm Management Plan, Flood Hazard Management Plan or other functional plan; or~~
- b. ~~\_\_\_\_\_ The project would improve agricultural productivity within the APD))~~ and flood risk reduction projects in an APD:
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ shall be planned with property owners whose land would be affected by the project;
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ shall be planned and designed to optimize benefits to agricultural production in the same APD;
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ to the maximum extent practical, should be located on sites that are unsuitable for direct agricultural production purposes; and
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ if the project's success necessitates locating on a site in the APD that is suitable for direct agricultural production, shall result in substantial benefits to agricultural productivity within the same APD and shall result in substantial benefits for salmon recovery efforts or to flood risk reduction. If these conditions cannot be achieved directly, King County shall ensure actions are implemented to offset any adverse impacts to agricultural productivity within the same APD that result from the project.

**R-649                      Maintaining the viability of farmlands is a high priority for King County. Within the Agricultural Production Districts, measures to protect threatened or endangered species shall be tailored to ensure working farms can continue to operate.**

Two APDs in or near urban areas, the Lower Green River Valley and Sammamish Valley, were designated in the 1985 Comprehensive Plan, and those designations have been retained. The development rights from many, but not all, of the parcels in these two districts have been purchased through the Farmland((s)) Preservation Program. The Lower Green APD is completely surrounded by urban designated land and as such, functions as both prime agriculture land and urban separator. The challenges to agriculture from urban development include alterations to hydrology that result in flooded fields, increased traffic that interferes with farm vehicles on roads, increased lighting at night, ((and)) complaints from urban neighbors about farm operations, and high land prices. The ((opportunities)) benefits of being located near urban areas include access to urban markets and consumers and increased recognition and appreciation of locally produced goods.

**R-650                      King County commits to preserve APD parcels in or near the Urban Growth Area because of their high production capabilities, their proximity to markets, and their value as open space. King County should work with cities adjacent to or near APDs to minimize the operational and environmental impacts of urban development on farming, and to promote activities and infrastructure, such as farmers((')) markets and agriculture processing businesses, that benefit both the cities and the farms by improving access to locally grown agricultural products.**

**R-651                      The Lower Green River Agricultural Production District is a regionally designated resource that is to remain in unincorporated King County. The Lower Green River APD functions as an urban separator between the cities of Kent and Auburn. King County may contract with other jurisdictions to provide some local services to this area as appropriate.**

Pastoral vistas make agriculture land a popular destination for recreation. However, creating parks in the APDs is not appropriate because the land should be prioritized for agriculture. In addition, heavy recreation use in or near the APDs could result in ~~Parks and farms are not necessarily good neighbors,~~

~~since park users can trespass and damage to crops, animals and farm equipment. Recreation near and within districts can be planned to prevent trespass. For example, a park located across a river or ravine from an APD or a farm would have a pleasant view of farmland without encouraging trespass.))~~

**R-652                    Active recreational facilities should not be located within APDs. When new parks or trails are planned for areas within or adjacent to APDs, King County should work with farmers to minimize impacts to farmland and agricultural operations.**

Public road and utility projects within and through APDs must be designed to prevent disruption to agriculture. For example, roads shall have adequate shoulders and signs to protect farm equipment and alert faster vehicles to the presence of farming activity. Therefore, road and utility district capital facilities and plans, including water, ~~((waste water))~~wastewater, reclaimed water, and drainage, need to ensure that services are consistent with preservation of long-term agriculture. (Chapter Eight, Services, Facilities and Utilities, contains policies requiring special district plans to be consistent with land use plans.)

**R-653                    Public services and utilities within and adjacent to APDs shall be designed to minimize significant adverse impacts on agriculture and to maintain total farmland acreage and the area's historic agricultural character:**

- a.        Whenever feasible, water lines, sewer lines and other public facilities should avoid crossing APDs. Installation should be timed to minimize negative impacts on seasonal agricultural practices; ~~((and))~~
- b.        Road projects planned for the APDs including additional roads or the widening of roads should be limited to those that are needed for safety or infrastructure preservation and ~~((which))~~ that benefit agricultural uses. Where possible, arterials should be routed around the APDs. Roads that cross APDs should be aligned, designed, signed and maintained to minimize negative impacts on agriculture, and to support farm traffic; and
- c.        In cases when public or privately owned facilities meeting regional needs must intrude into APDs, they should be built and located to minimize disruption of agricultural activity.



- R-654                      Lands can be removed from the APDs(~~(, except as provided in R-655,))~~ only when it can be demonstrated that:
- a.            Removal of the land will not diminish the productivity of prime agricultural soils or the effectiveness of farming within the local APD boundaries;  
~~((and))~~
  - b.            The land is determined to be no longer suitable for agricultural purposes(~~(-))~~); and
  - c.            ~~((In addition to meeting these two tests, r))~~ Removal of the land from the APD may ~~((only))~~-occur only if it is mitigated through the addition of agricultural land abutting the same APD that is at least comparable in size, soil quality and agricultural value. ~~((of equal acreage and of equal or better soils and agriculture value.))~~

~~((R-655 ————— Land that is zoned rural and has permanent non-agricultural structures can be removed from the Sammamish APD only when a subarea plan demonstrates that removal of the land will not diminish the productivity of prime agricultural soils or the effectiveness of farming within the APD. Land to be removed from the APD shall retain rural zoning and shall not be rezoned to urban zoning. The removal of land zoned rural from the Sammamish APD shall not be contingent on the addition of land to the APD.))~~

## 2.      Sustaining Agriculture and Farming

King County has made a significant investment in preserving farmland for agriculture and, as a result, has also preserved the open space benefits of these lands. The county must ensure that this land continues to be farmed into the future by helping farmers maintain and operate their farms and by promoting local agricultural products through infrastructure and activities that improve access to locally grown agricultural products.

In order to further maintain and enhance commercial farming on small farmland parcels, farmers and prospective farmers must have access to information on marketing and production strategies for small acreages, the potential for specialty crops and sustainable farming techniques.

King County recognizes the value of farmers markets for their role in community-building, their contribution to farmer success by providing a direct-marketing opportunity, and for making the bounty of King County farms available to city residents.

**R-656                    King County shall work with and provide support to ~~((the work of))~~ Washington State University Extension for its research and education programs that assist ~~((technical and marketing assistance for))~~ small-scale commercial farmers.**

**R-657                    King County shall work with other jurisdictions ~~((continue))~~ to broaden support for ~~((innovative initiatives, such as))~~ the Puget Sound Fresh Program, which provides marketing assistance to farmers and links consumers to local farms and farmers markets. ~~((and Farmlink Programs, to promote and enhance agriculture in King County.))~~**

**R- 657a                    King County should work with other jurisdictions, farm advocacy groups and others to support Farmlink and other programs that help new farmers get started, gain access to farmland and develop successful marketing methods.**

**R-657b                    King County should work with other jurisdictions to continue to provide support to farmers markets.**

**R-658                    The county should develop ~~((specific))~~ incentives to encourage agricultural activities in the remaining prime farmlands located outside the APD. These incentives could include tax credits, expedited permit review, reduced permit fees, permit exemptions for activities complying with best management practices or similar programs.**

King County recognizes the importance of adding value to and direct sales of agricultural products as a way to keep agriculture viable in an urban landscape. King County's agriculture program works with farmers to encourage them to add value to their products by processing, packaging, and selling them directly to the consumer.

**R-659                    Agricultural processing, packing and direct sales are considered agricultural activities and should be allowed at a size and scale appropriate to the zone in which they are operating. King County shall work with local and state health departments to develop regulations supporting these activities.**

**R-660                    King County supports the processing and packaging of farm products from crops and livestock, and will continue to work with farmers, ranchers, cities, neighboring counties, and other interested parties to address the infrastructure and regulatory needs to promote sales to consumers, institutions, restaurants, and retail enterprises.**

**R-661                    King County supports innovative technologies to process dairy and other livestock waste to reduce nutrients and to create other products such as energy and compost in the Agriculture and Rural zoning classifications.**

King County's APDs have some of the best soil and conditions for growing food in the country. There is an increasing awareness among farmers about the potential for expanding local food production compatible with a variety of sustainability goals. Concerned about multiple threats to future food production, King County farmers are working with others to promote voluntary incentives that will increase the community of those involved in the local production of food.

**R-662                    The county should develop incentives that support local food production and processing to reduce energy use, increase food security and provide a healthy local food supply.**

Agricultural practices modify the natural environment in order to produce food or fiber or maintain livestock for human use. Ideally, practices that maintain the productivity of the lands also protect environmental quality and respect natural processes such as flooding and channel migration. Farmers, technical advisors, floodplain managers, and environmental regulators must work together to understand the relationships between production practices, environmental protection, public safety, and profitability. These practices, referred to as best management practices, are designed to prevent erosion, maintain flood conveyance and flood storage, retain riparian vegetation, avoid stream bank

collapse, properly dispose of animal wastes, safely use and dispose of pesticides and prevent excessive surface water runoff.

Climate change has the potential to affect farming in King County, with increased severity of winter flooding, higher summer temperatures, reduced availability of surface and groundwater for irrigation, increased pest risk, and changes in the types of crops suited to this area. At the same time, soil best management practices, including use of cover crops and modified tilling methods, can help to mitigate the impacts of climate change by retaining soil moisture, sequestering carbon, and reducing other greenhouse gas emissions. Consideration and investigation of alternative water supplies, such as reclaimed water, can also help to mitigate the impacts of climate change and help support local and sustainable agriculture. Development of anaerobic digesters for dairy manure and other agricultural waste products can capture methane gas and convert it to usable energy. Having locally-available produce can help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transport.

King County's policies in this chapter to conserve farmland and encourage food production take on a greater significance when considering that climate change may result in food shortages in other parts of the country and world. The Puget Sound region may become even more valuable for food production than it already is if producing food in other parts of the world becomes more difficult.

**R-663                      King County shall provide incentives, educational programs and other methods to encourage agricultural practices and technological improvements that maintain water quality, protect public health, protect fish and wildlife habitat, protect historic resources, maintain flood conveyance and storage, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, control noxious weeds, and prevent erosion of valuable agricultural soils while maintaining the functions needed for agricultural production.**

In order to maintain and operate their farms, farmers need assistance in maintaining farm viability in the face of increasing urbanization; increased flooding and water scarcity caused by climate change; and the increased impacts of upslope development.

- R-664                    King County shall continue ~~((its Agricultural Building Permit program))~~ to support agriculture with an expedited review process and reduced fees for structures necessary for farm operations.
- R-665                    The county shall work with federal, state, local, and private agencies to ensure and maintain adequate water for the needs of agriculture. Assessments of future surface and groundwater availability for agriculture should consider projected impacts of climate change.
- R-666                    King County should continue to collaborate with Washington State University including Extension, the University of Washington, and King Conservation District to develop information on the likely impacts of climate change on agriculture in King County, and to develop mitigation and adaptation strategies that are appropriate for King County's soils and farm economy. Research should address soil management, water storage, irrigation, alternative crops, integrated pest management, and nutrient management. The information should be made available to farmers through technical assistance programs and farm planning.
- R-667                    King County should provide incentives for soil management practices that reduce greenhouse emissions through its Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost-Sharing Program.

An alluvial fan is ~~((an area in a valley or ravine that is the collection point for gravel deposits from a river))~~ a depositional landform along a watercourse where there is an abrupt decrease in gradient and a resulting area of active sediment deposition. Most alluvial fans in King County form where steep tributary streams discharge onto nearly level river floodplains. Since much of the county's farmland is located in valley floors, some agricultural landowners have properties on or containing alluvial fans that are significantly affected by the episodic deposits of upslope sediment and debris that ~~((land on their operations))~~ accumulate on their land. These events result in obstructed stream channels, filled wetlands, covered farmland, and disruptions in operations. Water is redirected into unexpected places. Permits, regulations, and the lack of approved management practices make it difficult to remedy the situation to regain operations and farm viability.

**R-668                      King County should use pilot or demonstration projects and multi-agency collaboration to develop a new suite of ~~((allowed))~~ practices that will provide options for landowners whose existing operations are affected by alluvial fan deposits. These should provide timely and cost-effective relief from debris and the associated changes to the watercourse along with protection ~~((and/or))~~ of intact fish habitat and restoration of degraded fish habitat within these areas.**

Agricultural lands have historically been located in floodplains. Agriculture coexists with flood storage and seasonal inundation; however, there is a growing concern that farmers cannot protect their investments from flooding. The federal, state and local flood hazard management standards are designed to ensure there is no adverse impact to upstream or downstream property owners from activities that are allowed within the floodplain. King County recognizes that most of the agriculture in the county is located in the floodplains because that is where the prime agricultural soils are. This industry requires special consideration because it is tied to these agricultural soils, and can occur almost nowhere else in the county.

**R-669                      King County should work with federal, state and local jurisdictions to reduce flood impacts to agricultural operations. The county will ~~((consider))~~ investigate the needs of agriculture before, during and after flood events, to determine if and how losses can be reduced, and will use this information in designing its floodplain policies and regulations.**

The high cost of agricultural land continues to be a barrier for many farmers wishing to locate their farm businesses within King County. The steady rise in agricultural land values continues to hamper the ability of many potential and current farmers to enter or expand their operations.

**R-670                      In addition to enhancing the FPP, the county should develop more innovative solutions and incentives to keep agricultural land affordable and profitable for active farming.**

### 3. Agriculture and the Food System

King County has a year-round growing season, a strong farming tradition and local farming expertise, and proximity to major markets for local foods and food products. Many of the policies in the previous section are aimed at helping to overcome obstacles to successful farming in King County. With that direction and a focus on production of food, farmlands in King County could be even more instrumental in strengthening the food system for the benefit of all King County residents.

Agricultural lands, farming practices and activities, and farmers are part of the local and regional food system. In addition to the growing of food, the food system includes processing, distribution, food availability, and disposal. As more people move to this region, King County recognizes the importance of planning for our regional food system to further a number of county initiatives and goals:

- Expand opportunities for local farms and enhance the rural economy;
- Promote healthy eating to improve public health;
- Improve access to healthy, safe, and affordable food, to all county residents; especially those with low incomes;
- Reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions; and
- Divert food waste from landfills.

With increased global trade, food is traveling more miles from farm to table. Reducing food miles—buying food grown closer to home—is one way to help improve the environment. There is increasing attention on how our current system of transporting food over thousands of miles is detrimental to the environment and may be a significant factor in global warming. University of Washington researchers have shown that a Skagit Valley apple requires about two-thirds less energy to be grown and shipped to local retailers than an apple from New Zealand.

Studies have shown that 35% of garbage is food. Efforts to recycle food waste and divert edible food to hunger programs could reduce what goes to the landfill, reduce methane generated by landfills, provide food for hungry people and provide soil amendments.

Food and nutrition are major factors in public health. The USDA's *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* calls for significant increases in daily consumption of fruit, vegetables, milk products and whole grains.

Efforts to increase the availability of these foods to King County residents should include encouraging an increase in food production on King County farms. Although it is not realistic for King County farms and farmers to provide the full complement of recommended foods in public health guidelines, there is the potential to increase food production for local and regional consumption, particularly in the first three categories.

- R-671**                    **King County should work with farmers and ranchers to better understand the constraints to increased food production in the county and develop programs that reduce barriers and create incentives to growing food crops and raising food-producing livestock.**
  
- R-672**                    **King County should prioritize its programs to help build and support a sustainable, reliable, equitable, and resilient local food system.**
  
- R-673**                    **King County should consider adopting procurement policies that would encourage purchases of locally grown fresh foods.**
  
- R-674**                    **King County should promote local food production and processing to reduce the distance that food must travel from farm to table.**

Government funded food programs are increasingly relying on electronic cards for clients to purchase food. For example, food stamps have been replaced with electronic benefits transfer cards. Grocery stores can easily adopt new electronic technology to accept such cards. It is more challenging for farmers markets to do so as the majority of them are open-air events in parking lots without access to electricity or telephone connections. To improve accessibility of farmers markets for low income shoppers, a concerted effort needs to be made to develop the ability to easily accept electronic payment. This will help make fresh food more available to low-income shoppers as well as increase the customer base for farmers.

- R-675**                    **King County should collaborate with other organizations to further the development of programs that increase the ability of shoppers to use food**



assistance benefits and the ability of farmers to accept electronic and other forms of payment at farmers markets and farm stands.

## **D. Mineral Resources**

King County contains many valuable mineral resources, including deposits of coal, sand, rock, gravel, silica, clay, metallic ores and potentially recoverable gas and oil. Mining and processing these deposits is an important part of King County's economy, currently providing hundreds of jobs and producing materials used locally, regionally, and nationally. Mining also has historic significance, in that it provided the impetus for past development in many parts of King County, including Black Diamond and the Newcastle area.

King County is required by the State Growth Management Act to designate and conserve mineral lands. In doing so the county must assure that land uses adjacent to mineral lands do not interfere with the continued use of mineral lands in their accustomed manner and in accordance with best management practices. The policies in this section explain the steps taken to designate and conserve mineral resource lands and provide direction on the comprehensive review needed before additional sites are designated for mineral resource extraction.

Four main steps are necessary to maintain and enhance commercial mineral resource industries. First, mineral resource sites should be conserved through designation and zoning. Second, land use conflicts between mining, processing and related operations and adjacent land uses should be prevented or minimized. Third, operational practices should protect environmental quality, fisheries and wildlife, in balance with the needs of the industry. Finally, mining areas need to be reclaimed in a timely and appropriate manner.

The Mineral Resources Map identifies four different types of Mineral Resource Sites. The sites were identified in the 1994 King County Comprehensive Plan or in subsequent annual updates. Following the Mineral Resources Map is a spreadsheet that contains information on each Mineral Resource Site parcel.

The Designated Mineral Resources Sites on the Mineral Resources Map satisfy King County's responsibility to designate and conserve mineral resources consistent with requirements of the GMA. All Designated Mineral Resources Sites have Mineral zoning. The criteria used in the 1994 King County

Comprehensive Plan called for designation of properties that at the time were either zoned outright for mining or those operating under an approved Unclassified Use Permit. In addition to the designated Mineral Resources Sites, the Forest Production District (FPD) and Forest (F) zone preserves the opportunity for mineral extraction. Mining is a permitted or conditional use in the F zone. Because forestry does not preclude future mineral extraction, King County considers the FPD as part of its strategy to conserve mineral resources.

The Mineral Resources Map also shows Potential Mineral Resource Sites. These are sites where King County expects some future surface mining to occur or where the owner or operator indicates an interest in future mining. Most of the Potential Mineral Resources Sites shown on the map contain sand and/or gravel; however, a few contain other mineral resources such as quarry rock and coal. Because of the geology of King County, most valuable metallic mineral resources are located in the Forest Production District, and are therefore already protected from urban development. Identification of Potential Mineral Resources Sites satisfies the GMA requirements to not knowingly preclude opportunities for future mining and to inform nearby property owners of the potential for future mining use of these areas in order to prevent or minimize conflicts.

The Mineral Resources Map also shows Non-Conforming Mineral Resources Sites. These are sites on which some mining operations predated King County zoning regulations without appropriate zoning or other land use approval. Mining for these sites has not been authorized through a Land Use Map or zoning designation. These sites are shown for informational purposes only. Mining can occur on an identified site only if mining has been approved as a nonconforming use by the Department of Development and Environmental Services, and mining activities have received all other necessary permit approvals. Because the sites have not undergone formal review to be designated on the Land Use Map or zoned for mining, the sites do not have long-term commercial significance. However, they can continue to serve mineral supply needs.

The Mineral Resources Map also shows Owner Identified Potential Coal Mining Sites that contain subsurface coal resources. These sites could be mined by either underground or surface mining techniques. Because of uncertainties involving the economics of energy and related market conditions, it is not always possible to determine the timing or likelihood of coal resources extraction in potential coal mining areas. Underground and surface coal mining is subject to permitting and enforcement by

the Federal Government. King County regulates land use decisions governing surface facilities. Because of the difficulty in precisely locating these facilities prior to an actual proposal, King County determined to not apply Potential M zoning to owner-identified coal resources sites.

**R-676                      King County shall identify existing and potential mining sites on the Mineral Resources Map in order to conserve mineral resources, promote compatibility with nearby land uses, protect environmental quality, maintain and enhance mineral resource industries and serve to notify property owners of the potential for mining activities. The county shall identify:**

- a.        Sites with existing Mineral zoning as Designated Mineral Resource Sites;**
- b.        Sites where the landowner or operator has indicated an interest in mining, sites that as of the date of adoption of the 1994 Comprehensive Plan had potential Quarrying/Mining zoning, or sites that the county determines might support future mining as Potential Mineral Resource Sites;**
- c.        Sites where mining operations predate zoning regulations but without zoning or other land use approvals as Non-Conforming Mineral Resource Sites; and**
- d.        Owner-Identified Potential Sub-Surface Coal Sites.**

**R-677                      King County shall designate as mining on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map those sites that had Potential Mineral (M) zoning prior to the date of adoption of the 1994 Comprehensive Plan and those sites that had Mineral zoning as of the date of the adoption of the King County Comprehensive Plan 2000 Update.**

**A mining designation on the Land Use Map shall not create a presumption that Mineral zoning will be approved for sites with Potential Mineral zoning. Potential Mineral zoning shall not be applied to additional sites.**

Mining is an intense operation that may continue for many years. Mining operations can significantly change the land being mined and have impacts on the environment and on nearby properties. King County requires comprehensive review, including environmental analysis, prior to approving a Land Use Map and zoning change. Site specific environmental review will also be required for a grading permit or

any other permit that is necessary for a mining operation. Therefore, a comprehensive site-specific study is required prior to any such approval.

- R-678                      King County may designate additional sites on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map as Mining only following a site-specific rezone to Mineral zoning. Upon approval of a rezone to Mineral zoning, the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map shall be amended to designate the site as mining during the next comprehensive plan amendment cycle. King County should approve applications for site-specific rezones to Mineral zoning and applications for permits that would authorize mineral extraction and processing only following site-specific environmental study, early and continuous public notice and comment opportunities, when:**
- a.        The proposed site contains rock, sand, gravel, coal, oil, gas or other mineral resources;**
  - b.        The proposed site is large enough to confine or mitigate all operational impacts;**
  - c.        The proposal will allow operation with limited conflicts with adjacent land uses when mitigating measures are applied;**
  - d.        The proposal has been evaluated under the State Environmental Policy Act so that the county may approve, condition or deny applications consistent with the county's substantive SEPA authority, and in order to mitigate significant adverse environmental impacts.**
  - e.        Roads or rail facilities serving or proposed to serve the site can safely and adequately handle transport of products and are in close proximity to the site.**

If King County denies an application for a site-specific rezone it should remove the mining land use designation and the associated Potential Mineral zoning for the site. If the county denies a permit that would authorize mineral extraction and/or processing on a Designated Mineral Resources Site, the county should consider new information generated during the permit review process to determine whether the site is not properly designated as mineral resource land of long-term commercial significance, the designation for the site on the Mineral Resources Map should be changed from Designated Mineral Resources Site to Potential surface Mineral Resource Site. In addition, the mining

land use designation and the Mineral zoning classification for the site should be amended to be compatible with the surrounding properties.

**R-679**                    **King County should remove the Mining land use designation on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map and associated Potential Mineral zone or Mineral zoning for any sites that have been denied a rezone to Mineral.**

**If a grading or other permit necessary for the extraction of mineral resources is denied on a Designated Mineral Resource Site, the county shall evaluate whether such mineral resource designation is appropriate. The re-evaluation process may occur during the annual comprehensive plan amendment cycle and information produced during the permit review process shall be used to evaluate the appropriateness of changing the existing designation. If the county determines that the site should not be designated as mineral resource land of long-term commercial significance as defined in the Growth Management Act, the site shall be redesignated to a Potential Surface Mineral Resource Site on the Mineral Resources Map and to a land use designation and zoning classification compatible with the surrounding properties.**

**R-680**                    **King County may update the Mineral Resources Map to identify additional Potential Mineral Resource Sites only during the four-year comprehensive plan amendment cycle.**

**R-681**                    **The preferred adjacent land uses to sites designated as Mining on the Land Use Map are mining, industrial, open space or forestry uses. Sites for newly proposed Mineral zones shall not be adjacent to or within Agricultural Production Districts. Agricultural lands and operations should be protected from significant impacts associated with nearby mine operations.**

**R-682**                    **Mining activities are permitted within the Forest Production District, consistent with R-620. However, a conditional use permit shall be required for mining activities in the Forest Production District located within one-quarter mile of**

established residences or for proposals seeking to use local access streets where abutting lots are developed for residential use.

- R-683** In order to comprehensively assess the environmental impacts associated with a zoning change, conditional use or operating approval for a mining proposal, the range of environmental impacts, including short-term and long-term effects arising or existing over the lifetime of the proposal, shall be assessed at the earliest possible stage. This should include the potential for future proposals for structures and operations related to mining, such as asphalt and concrete batch plants.
- R-684** King County should prevent or minimize conflicts with mining when planning land uses adjacent to Designated and Potential Mineral Resource Sites. Subarea plans may indicate areas where mining is an inappropriate land use. Designated and Potential Mineral Resource Sites and nonconforming sites should be shown on Mineral Resources Map and subarea plan maps in order to notify nearby property owners and residents of existing and prospective mining activities.
- R-685** The periodic review process for mineral extractive and processing operations shall include sufficient public notice and comment opportunities. The purpose of the periodic review process is to provide opportunities for public review and comment on the mineral resource facility's fulfillment of state and county regulations and implementation of industry-standard best management practices, and for King County to modify, add or remove conditions to address new circumstances and/or unanticipated project-generated impacts. The periodic review process is not intended to re-examine the appropriateness of the mineral resource use, or to consider expansion of operations beyond the scope of existing permitted operations since that review would be accomplished through the county's permitting process. The periodic review is intended to be a part of King County's ongoing enforcement and inspections of mineral resource sites, and not to be a part of the county's permitting process.

- R-686**                      **Conditions and mitigations for significant adverse environmental impacts associated with mining operations and their associated structures or facilities should be required, especially in the following areas:**
- a.        Air quality;**
  - b.        Environmentally sensitive and critical areas, such as surface and groundwater quality and quantity, wetlands, fisheries and wildlife habitats, and aquatic habitats;**
  - c.        Noise levels;**
  - d.        Vibration;**
  - e.        Light and glare;**
  - f.        Vehicular access and safety;**
  - g.        Land and shoreline uses;**
  - h.        Traffic impacts;**
  - i.        Visual impacts;**
  - j.        Cultural and historic features and resources;**
  - k.        Site security; and**
  - l.        Others unique to specific sites and proposals.**
- R-687**                      **King County should work with the state and federal governments to ensure that proposals for underground mining, oil and gas extraction, and surface coal mining are reviewed with consideration of local land use and environmental requirements.**
- R-688**                      **King County should work with the State Department of Natural Resources to ensure that mining areas are reclaimed in a timely and appropriate manner. Reclamation of mining sites in the Forest Production District should return the land to forestry. Where mining is completed in phases, reclamation also should be completed in phases as the resource is depleted. When reclamation of mining sites located outside of the Forest Production District is completed, the site should be considered for redesignation to a land use designation and zoning classification compatible with the surrounding properties.**

**R-689**

**King County shall encourage the removal of existing stockpiles of previously mined material in order to promote and achieve reclamation of land to its highest and best use.**