



Skyway-West Hill Subarea Plan Public Review Draft Reader's Guide

Dear Skyway-West Hill community member:

Thank you for reviewing the 2021 Public Review Draft of the [Skyway-West Hill Community Service Area Subarea Plan](#) and [Land Use and Zoning Map Amendments](#). The Subarea Plan expresses the community's vision for the future and sets policies that will guide decisions affecting your neighborhood for years to come.

This reader's guide is a summary of the draft subarea plan and map amendments, followed by a glossary of key terms used in the subarea plan.

The comment period runs **through Sunday, Dec. 19**. After this date, King County will use what we have heard from the public to update the plan and map amendments. The King County Executive will send the revised plan and amendments to the King County Council early in 2022.

There are several ways to share your thoughts about the plan:

1. **Dynamic web portal:** www.publicinput.com/Skyway (provides information and allows comments in many languages)
2. **Email:** SubareaPlanning@kingcounty.gov. Please make sure that the subject line includes "Skyway."
3. **U.S. Mail:** Kevin LeClair, King County Permitting Division, 35030 SE Douglas Street Suite 210, Snoqualmie WA 98065-9266
4. **Voicemail:** 206-263-3000

Thank you for taking part in this important process.

To request this information in another format or language, call 206-477-3800 or email asklocalservices@kingcounty.gov.

Para solicitar esta información en Español, llamar al 206-477-3800 o envíe un mensaje de correo electrónico a asklocalservices@kingcounty.gov.

Si aad u weyddiisato inaad ku hesho macluumaadkan Af-Soomaali, fadlan wac 206-206-477-3800 ama iimayl u dir asklocalservices@kingcounty.gov.

Để có các thông tin này bằng tiếng Việt, xin gọi số 206-477-3800 hoặc gửi điện thư đến asklocalservices@kingcounty.gov.

Introduction

The Skyway-West Hill Subarea Plan Public Review Draft begins with an introduction that explains why King County is planning for the future of Skyway-West Hill, explains the central role of equity and social justice in the plan, and says “the ultimate goal of the Skyway-West Hill Subarea Plan is to make real, equitable improvements to the quality of life for everyone who lives, works, and plays in Skyway-West Hill.”

The introduction describes the planning history of this area. Then it summarizes past community planning efforts and briefly describes the Community Needs List process that began in 2020—a process that is associated with, but separate from, the Subarea Plan.

The Subarea Plan chapters (except for the Introduction, Vision and Guiding Principles, and Community Description), are arranged as follows:

- Background and context
- Community priorities and needs
- Policies

Chapter 1: Vision and Guiding Principles

The community vision and guiding principles were based on community input that went into the 2015 Skyway-West Hill Action Plan, the 2020 Skyway-West Hill Land Use Strategy, and community requests received as part of King County’s process to develop a Community Needs List.

Community Vision Statement

Skyway-West Hill will grow into a vibrant, walkable neighborhood where housing is affordable, and local, community-based businesses are thriving. Skyway-West Hill will be an ethnically diverse and civically engaged community where the collective voice, wisdom, and expertise of its residents and business owners are vital in ongoing civic decision-making.

This chapter provides a brief description of how King County and the community have been working together for the past several years on the subarea plan and other planning efforts.

Community engagement on the subarea plan happened in two parts. The first part, between 2018 and 2020, focused mostly on land use and led to the adoption of the Skyway-West Hill Land Use Strategy. During the second part, from mid-2020 until now, we have revisited some issues from the first phase but also discussed other priority issues and needs with the community.

Chapter 2: Community Description

This chapter describes the geography, population, and demographics in Skyway-West Hill, as well as some of the government agencies and special service districts there.

It explores some of the demographics, such as the fact that Skyway-West Hill has the highest proportion (28%) of Black and African American residents of any community in Washington. It is also very diverse in terms of languages spoken at home. The top non-English languages spoken there today are Vietnamese, Tagalog, Spanish, Chinese, and Russian.

The chapter then describes the different ways land is being used in the neighborhood. For example: detached, single-family residential; multi-family; and commercial areas.

It highlights several non-governmental organizations that provide services to the community, then describes government agencies that provide services and programs—such as the Skyway Water and Sewer District, Seattle Public Utilities, Fire District #20, the City of Renton, and the Renton School District.

The chapter briefly discusses annexation, along with some history regarding a 2012 vote in which 56% of residents voted *not* to become part of Renton.

Finally, the chapter ends with an overview of how Skyway-West Hill fits in regional plans for future growth.

Chapter 3: Land Use

This chapter explains how the subarea plan is related to the [King County Comprehensive Plan](#), and describes how the Comprehensive Plan land use designations indicate the planned long-term use of an area. Zoning classifications also regulate how a particular property can be used as well as the development regulations that apply to the property.

As of 2021, the majority (66%) of Skyway-West Hill has a land use designation of “urban residential medium,” which allows between 4 and 12 residential dwelling units per acre. The next most common (9%) land use designation in this area is “urban residential high,” which allows 18-48 dwelling units per acre.

Just over 2% of the land area of Skyway-West Hill is designated as “community business center,” which allows for zoning classifications of NB (Neighborhood Business), CB (Community Business), and O (Office). This area is called the Skyway Business District, and it is almost entirely commercial, but the zoning does allow mixed-use developments (buildings that have both commercial and residential space).

Here are some of the land use priorities that community members told us about:

- New development must be done in a way that is respectful of the community and based on meaningful community input and engagement.
- King County should make sure that new development enriches the lives of existing community residents with new jobs, amenities, and services, and that it does not directly displace them or their neighbors, or “gentrify” the neighborhood in ways that make it lose its current strong sense of community.
- Residents and businesses support additional investment and revitalization of the commercial center of the neighborhood if it is done in ways that protect and support small, local business; enhance the overall character of the neighborhood with thoughtful design of the sidewalks, storefronts, and common area; and ensure that utilities and services are available for current and future residents.

The land use chapter finishes with 18 proposed policies that are grouped under the headings of Land Use, Residential, Commercial and Industrial, and Community Amenities. The policies in this chapter, when combined with policies in other chapters, are designed to reduce the threat of displacement, support increasing a range of housing options, support existing business areas, and provide amenities that community members want.

Chapter 4: Housing and Human Services

The housing and human services chapter describes the profound effect that planning decisions have on the strength of residential neighborhoods and their ability to support intergenerational and diverse communities. It describes the total number of housing units, and the mixture between single-family homes, apartments, and manufactured homes.

The chapter then discusses the rising cost of housing in the neighborhood and the burden it is placing on current residents.

Here are some of the housing priorities that community members told us about:

- Equitable development should be a key focus. This includes preventing the displacement of current residents and creating more housing that is affordable to community members.
- Many residents believe that affordable housing in the area is an asset. They support the protection and creation of affordable housing.
- Create protections against residential displacement. These may include programs or regulatory requirements that consider preserving existing “naturally affordable” housing and/or provide new subsidized affordable units, and community protections for residents.

This chapter lists five proposed housing-related policies that support keeping and increasing housing and addressing displacement. A wide range of housing types, including ones that are affordable to community members, can be created through preservation of existing housing and with new housing developments.

This is followed by a discussion of how the King County Comprehensive Plan prioritizes delivery of human services as a way to create sustainable communities and support environmental justice. Those services include health care, food systems, childhood education, and the social service network.

Here are some of the health and human services priorities that community members told us about:

- Support area youths with recreation, education, and employment programs.
- Provide more social and health services that are easily accessible in the neighborhood, including mental health services and special services for elderly and disabled residents, who face the most challenges accessing transportation.
- Improve access to healthy food options through creation of a regular farmer’s market in the Skyway Business District and supporting the addition of more restaurants that serve a range of food options catering to local cultures and tastes.

The chapter finishes with two proposed health and human service-related policies intended to support positive health outcomes and supportive services.

Chapter 5: Parks, Open Space, and Cultural Resources

This chapter begins with an explanation of how parks and open spaces are managed in unincorporated King County and a description of King County’s park and open space system.

Skyway-West Hill has about 27 acres of public parkland inside its boundaries. Of this, 23 acres are developed as Skyway Park, which sits in a depression behind the Skyway Business District. The other four acres are an area of undeveloped open space that is known as Bryn Mawr Park.

This chapter describes some recent planning efforts intended to lay out a vision for Skyway Park and realize the community goal of creating a community center.

The chapter then describes the regional multi-use trails (biking and pedestrian) that surround the Skyway-West Hill community.

In February 2021, King County published its 30-Year Forest Plan, which included an analysis of the forest canopy cover in Skyway-West Hill. It found that tree and forest canopies cover about

511 acres of the neighborhood—around 28% of the area. Skyway-West Hill’s canopy coverage is similar to those of Seattle and Kent.

Here are some of the parks and open space priorities that community members told us about:

- Improve recreational amenities, access, and parking at Skyway Park.
- Acquire additional parks and open space lands throughout the neighborhood, so more people will have access to nature and recreational amenities near their homes.
- Acquire and develop a Skyway-West Hill Community Center.

The chapter lists seven proposed policies intended to support increased recreational and cultural opportunities and improve human health and environmental conditions.

Chapter 6: Transportation

This chapter describes how the transportation network affects the quality of peoples’ lives and the economy. It explains some of the transportation infrastructure challenges facing unincorporated King County, and notes that Skyway-West Hill needs more investment in its transportation system.

The chapter describes the services and facilities managed by the King County Road Services Division, including a short description of unfunded projects identified in the county’s [Transportation Needs Report](#).

Martin Luther King Jr. Way S, also known as State Route 900, is the subject of a 2021 project by the Washington State Department of Transportation. The project’s goal is to evaluate the corridor and ask community residents for their ideas about ways to make it safer, more functional, and more attractive.

The chapter describes the services and programs provided by King County Metro Transit. These include regular “fixed route” bus service and corresponding Access paratransit service in Skyway-West Hill, as well as several recent program enhancements.

Here are some of the transportation priorities that community members told us about:

- A need for more and improved sidewalks, bike lanes, and regional trail connections that can provide safe, healthy areas to recreate as well as additional commuting options to nearby destinations.
- A need for more streetlights in residential areas to light roadways for both motorists and pedestrians.
- A need for more bus service, especially routes that connect the residential areas along Martin Luther King Jr. Way S with the Skyway Business District.

The chapter lists four proposed policies intended to support growth near transit and a safe and encouraging environment for walking, transit use, and biking.

Chapter 7: Services and Utilities

For any urban community to thrive, it must be adequately supported by a full range of urban utilities and services. These include water and sanitary sewers, stormwater management, solid waste collection and disposal, and fire protection. Skyway-West Hill is served by several special utility districts and organizations that provide these vital services. This chapter focuses specifically on water and sewer service needs.

Here are some of the utility priorities that community members told us about:

- New development should be well-planned, with utilities and services that are both adequate for new development and have capacity for future growth.
- Make sure that new developments in Skyway-West Hill are designed to include new water and sanitary sewer connections for existing private property owners who are relying on older, failing on-site septic systems.
- Make sure that junk vehicles and illegal dumping are removed and cleaned up quickly to show community pride and protect the health and safety of residents.

The chapter lists three proposed policies intended to address the need for well-planned and adequate utilities and services.

Chapter 8: Economic Development

This chapter focuses on helping to increase economic opportunities for residents, improve the environment for local small businesses, and reduced displacement. It includes a summary of the current jobs and employment picture in Skyway-West Hill.

Here are some of the economic development priorities that community members told us about:

- Most residents of Skyway-West Hill want to see new development in Skyway’s business districts.
- Most are interested in supporting small, locally owned, and independent stores in area business districts.
- Provide more community involvement in economic development decisions that affect the area.

- Business enterprises and entrepreneurs should share the racial and ethnic diversity of Skyway-West Hill.

The chapter lists two proposed policies intended to support economic and other community development needs.

Appendices

The Skyway-West Hill Subarea Plan Public Review Draft has four appendices. Appendix A is a collection of maps and tables that were used to develop the subarea plan. Appendix B proposes a plan for monitoring the implementation and performance of the subarea plan. This includes five standardized, numeric-based performance measures that can be tracked over time, and five Skyway-West Hill-specific qualitative, narrative-based, implementation measures that tell the story of how the community is fulfilling its vision. Appendix C is an equity impact review intended to summarize how the subarea plan was developed and how it might affect residents of Skyway-West Hill. Appendix D is a summary of the community engagement that was done by King County as we developed the subarea plan.

Land Use and Zoning Map Amendments

When the Skyway-West Hill Subarea Plan is sent to the King County Council, it will be accompanied by a set of recommended [Land Use and Zoning Map Amendments](#). These are:

Map Amendment 1: Skyway Business District – Designation to Skyway Unincorporated Activity Center

This amendment has two parts. The first part establishes a new **Unincorporated Activity Center** in the economic core of Skyway-West Hill, where the most development investment and focus should be directed. This area contains frequent transit service, which will support more business and housing development. It accomplishes this by changing the land use designation from **Community Business Center, Urban Residential High, and Urban Residential Medium** to **Unincorporated Activity Center** on parcels in the Skyway Business District, high and medium-residential areas in the vicinity, and surrounding Skyway Park.

The second part of Map Amendment 1 proposes changing the zoning on 113 parcels as follows:

5. On 2 parcels, amend the zoning **from R-24-P** (Urban Residential, 24-dwelling units per acre with a P-suffix Development Condition) **to CB-P-SO** (Community Business with a P-suffix Development Condition and a Special District Overlay); and apply [Special District Overlay SO-050](#).

6. On 1 parcel, amend the zoning **from R-6** (Urban Residential, 6-dwelling units per acre) **to CB-P-SO** (Community Business with a P-suffix Development Condition and a Special District Overlay); and apply [Special District Overlay SO-050](#) and P-suffix [Development Condition WH-P11](#).
7. On 66 parcels, amend the zoning **from R-6** (Urban Residential, 6-dwelling units per acre) **to R-12** (Urban Residential, 12 units per acre).
8. On 19 parcels, amend the zoning **from R-6-P** (Urban Residential, 6-dwelling units per acre) **to R-12** (Urban Residential, 12 dwelling units per acre and removal of P-suffix [Development Condition WH-P05](#)).
9. On 3 parcels, remove P-suffix [development condition WH-P05](#).
10. On 22 parcels, amend the zoning **from R-6** (Urban Residential, 6 dwelling units per acre) **to NB-SO** (Neighborhood Business); and **add a new Micro-Enterprise Special District Overlay** that is intended to promote small-scale commercial opportunities and provides for pedestrian-oriented retail and service uses. This amendment allows for a limited range of commercial uses and allow higher residential density that is currently allowed. These changes provide for a commercial linkage between the two end of the Skyway Business District and increase housing choices in the Unincorporated Activity Center. The full text of the Micro-Enterprise Special District Overlay can be found at the end of the [Land Use and Zoning Map Amendments](#).

Map Amendment 2: Renton Ave South – Affordable Housing Requirement Removal

This amendment removes P-suffix [Development Condition WH-P05](#) from 33 parcels. This development condition requires 20% of the dwelling units built in a new development to be reserved for income qualifying households earning 60% or less of the King County Area Median Income. These parcels would still be eligible for other affordable housing incentives in the King County Code.

Map Amendment 3: Martin Luther King Jr. Way – Residential Density Increase and Affordable Housing Requirement Removal

1. On 9 parcels, amends the zoning **from R-24-P-SO** (Urban Residential, 24 dwelling units per acre with P-suffix [Development Conditions WH-P08 and WH-P09](#) and a [Special District Overlay SO-280](#)) **to R-48-P-SO** (Urban Residential, 48 dwelling units per acre with P-suffix Development Conditions WH-P08 and WH-P09 and a Special District Overlay SO-280); and removes P-suffix Development Condition WH-P08.
2. On 4 parcels, amends the zoning **from R-24-P** (Urban Residential, 24 dwelling units per acre with a P-suffix [Development Condition WH-P08](#)) **to R-48** (Urban Residential, 48 dwelling units per acre and removes P-suffix [Development Condition WH-P08](#)).

Map Amendment 4: Skyway Park – Skyway-West Hill Open Space System Expansion

This amendment changes the Comprehensive Plan land use designation **from Urban Residential, Medium and Urban Residential, High to King County Open Space System** on

parcels next to Skyway Park and the Skyway Business District. These parcels have been or are actively being acquired (expected to be completed by transmittal of the proposed map amendments) by the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks to be included in the King County Park and Open Space System. This amendment indicates the long-range use of the parcels for park, recreation, or open space.

Plain-language explanations of technical terms used in subarea plans and map amendments

General Terms
Affordable Housing means housing that costs more than 30% of a household's total monthly income.
Annexation means the process of adding an urban unincorporated County area into a city's incorporated boundary.
Area Median Income means the household income for the median – or middle point – of households in a region. This is federal measure used to determine access to services.
BIPOC means black, indigenous, and other people of color.
Community Needs List means the community-created list of services, programs and capital improvement projects that support the community’s vision for their neighborhood.
Community Service Area (CSA) Subarea Plan means a 20-year plan that addresses a wide range of growth management topics in a focused geographic area. Subarea plans include a community vision statement and neighborhood-specific policies that guide decisions for the next 20-years. These plans are part of, and focus and tailor policies within, the County's Comprehensive Plan. There are six rural and five urban CSA planning geographies.
Community Vision Statements are part of a subarea plan and describe the future state of the community after the guiding principles, policies, and land use and zoning changes in the subarea plan have been realized.
Comprehensive Plan means the County's long-range plan for managing future population growth. It addresses land use, housing, transportation, utilities, capital facilities, and other elements, consistent with state law. CSA Subarea Plans are part of the Comprehensive Plan.
Density Incentive means the programs that allow construction projects to have more homes or employment space in exchange for some type of public benefit, such as including affordable housing or protection of open space.
Density means the number of buildings in a geographic area. Density is usually discussed as the number of homes on an acre of land.
Determinants of Equity means the physical and social conditions in the area where people are born, live, and work. These include access to childhood development services, jobs and job training, healthy food, parks and open space, public safety, and more.

General Terms
<p>Development Regulation means the locally-adopted laws for zoning, building and construction standards, environmental protections, subdivisions, and more. Development regulations must be consistent with the policies in the Comprehensive Plan and subarea plans.</p>
<p>Displacement means the involuntary relocation of current residents or businesses from their current home or commercial space. This can occur due to increased housing or leasing costs, evictions, property sales, or other reasons.</p>
<p>Dwelling Unit means a home with one or more rooms that a person would live in, and this usually includes a kitchen and either private or shared bathrooms.</p>
<p>Equitable Development is when quality of life outcomes are equitably experienced by the people currently living and working a neighborhood, as well as by new people who are moving in. This usually includes focusing public and private projects, services, and programs on the needs of historically underserved populations.</p>
<p>Gentrification is when there is an influx of high-income people renovating or building new homes and businesses in a neighborhood with historical segregation and/or disinvestment, and this can cause displacement.</p>
<p>Growth Management Act means the state law under which subarea plans and comprehensive plans, and the implementing development regulations, are created in order to plan for future population growth.</p>
<p>Guiding Principles are goal-oriented statements that help define the Community Vision Statement in a subarea plan. They are usually future oriented and frame how the policies of the subarea plan are to be understood and implemented.</p>
<p>Inclusionary Zoning means a range of strategies that help build affordable housing as part of new market-rate housing projects. This usually includes incentives, such as density bonuses, in exchange for building affordable units.</p>
<p>Incorporated Areas means the land in a city's boundary.</p>
<p>Middle Density Housing mean duplexes, townhouses, and small apartment or condominium buildings that are a couple of stories tall. Not included in this are single-family homes and larger apartment or condominium buildings.</p>
<p>Mixed-Use Development means buildings that contain both commercial and housing spaces. A common example would be a building with retail stores on the first floor and apartments on the upper floors.</p>

General Terms
Potential Annexation Area means urban unincorporated County land that is affiliated with a city for future annexation.
Transit-Oriented Development means the construction of new housing located near public transit services.
Unincorporated Areas means land in the County's jurisdiction and not within a city's boundary.
Urban Growth Area means the area defined in Comprehensive Plans for where most future homes will be built and jobs will be created. This protects open spaces and farm and forest lands.
Urban Services and Facilities includes sanitary and storm sewer systems, water supply, energy, telecommunications, public safety and emergency services, schools, libraries, and more.

Land Use and Zoning Terms

Center means an area identified a local or regional plan where more housing and jobs will be focused, and are also potential focus areas for public funding, projects, services, and programs. Across the County, there are *regional* and *local* centers and, starting in 2021, there will be locally-identified *countywide* centers.

The Comprehensive Plan includes a number of *local* center types – unincorporated activity center, regional business center, community business center, neighborhood center, and rural neighborhood center. County-identified centers are usually based on the type of zoning and existing development in an area, and they create capacity for accommodating future growth.

The *local* centers identified in the Comprehensive Plan include:

- Higher density developed industrial and commercial areas, and high-density housing, are classified as **unincorporated activity centers** and are intended to be the primary locations in the County for this type of commercial development.
- Midrange-density and mostly retail centers are called **community business centers**.
- Smaller, local centers that mainly offer convenience goods and services to local residents are called **neighborhood business centers**.

Because of existing densities, mixed-use development, and zoning, the **White Center** downtown area of North Highline is currently the only *local* Unincorporated Activity Center (UAC). The **Skyway Business District** and surrounding area is proposed to become a UAC to focus future housing and business activity in the community in this area. Both are also being considered for designation as *Countywide Centers* to allow them to compete for countywide transportation funding.

The **Land Use Map** in the Comprehensive Plan adopts the official land use designation for all properties in unincorporated King County. Land use designations set the general location and scale of the allowed uses of land. These designations include: unincorporated activity center, urban planned development, community business center, commercial outside of centers, neighborhood business center, urban residential high, urban residential medium, urban residential low, rural area, rural towns, rural neighborhood commercial centers, agriculture, forest, mining, king county open space system, greenbelt/urban separator, other parks/wilderness, and industrial.

Property-Specific Development Standard means conditions beyond the minimum requirements of the zoning code that apply to one or more properties. These limit the uses on the property or create additional standards for permit approval.

Land Use and Zoning Terms

Special District Overlays allow or require alternative land uses and development standards from the minimum requirements of the zoning code and are usually applied on large set of properties. These expand or alter the standard uses and/or permit standards in zoning code. These are often developed and proposed through larger planning processes, such as subarea plans.

Zoning in the King County Code, Title 21A, defines the range of land uses and functions on all properties in unincorporated King County. Zoning classifications implement the Land Use Map designations, and include: agricultural, forest, mineral, rural area, urban reserve, urban residential, neighborhood business, community business, regional business, office, and industrial. Many of these zones have subcategories that identify the allowed housing density for that zone. For example, the urban residential zone has eight subcategories ranging from R-1 (1 home allowed per acre) to R-48 (48 homes allowed per acre).

Sources:

- King County Department of Local Services Website, accessed 11/6/2021
- King County Comprehensive Plan, Glossary, 7/2020 adopted
- King County Code 2.10.020, Performance, Management and Accountability Definitions, accessed 11/6/2021
- King County Code Title 21A, accessed 11/6/2021
- King County Skyway-West Hill and North Highline Anti-displacement Strategies Report, 9/2021 transmitted
- Puget Sound Regional Council VISION 2050, Glossary, 10/2020 adopted
- City of Seattle Equitable Development Initiative, accessed 11/6/2021
- Merriam Webster Online, accessed 11/6/2021