



Snoqualmie Valley/Northeast King County Subarea Plan Public Review Draft – Reader’s Guide

Dear Snoqualmie Valley/NE King County community member:

The [Snoqualmie Valley/NE King County Subarea Plan](#) and Land Use and Zoning Map Amendments will express the community’s vision for the future and set policies that will guide decisions affecting the subarea for years to come.

This reader’s guide is a summary of the draft subarea plan and map amendments.

King County will accept public comments on the draft plan and amendments from **Thursday, June 1 through Saturday, July 15**. County planners will use the public comments we receive to update the plan and map amendments. The King County Executive will send the revised plan and map amendments to the King County Council for consideration in December 2023.

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

1. **Online:** publicinput.com/SnoValleyNEKC—this dynamic web portal provides information in many languages and accepts comments in those languages as well)
2. **Email:** jesreynolds@kingcounty.gov—Please make sure the subject line includes “Subarea Plan” or “SV/NEKC Plan”.
3. **U.S. Mail:** SV/NEKC Plan
201 S Jackson Street
KSC-LS-0815
Seattle, WA 98104
4. **Voicemail:** 206-477-4237

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

如需索取本資訊的中文版，請致電 206-263-9784 或發電郵到 AskLocalServices@kingcounty.gov.

Para solicitar esta información en español, llame al 206-477-3800 o envíe un mensaje de correo electrónico a AskLocalServices@kingcounty.gov.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The introduction to the subarea plan explains why King County is planning for the future of Snoqualmie Valley and Northeast King County. It also explains the central role of equity and social justice in the plan (“The ultimate goal of the Subarea Plan is to make real, equitable improvements to the quality of life *for everyone* who lives, works, and plays in Snoqualmie Valley/Northeast King County”).

The chapter then summarizes past community planning efforts, including the Snoqualmie Valley Community Plan, Fall City Subarea Plan, and amendments to the Fall City Subarea Plan. It explains directions in the King County Comprehensive Plan to do subarea planning at Snoqualmie Pass and to do a land use and zoning study for the Snoqualmie Interchange.

It includes a brief description of the [Community Needs List](#) process that King County began in 2022. That process is associated with, but separate from, this plan.

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

- Background and context
- Community priorities and needs
- Policies

The chapter finishes with an explanation of what equity and social justice mean to King County. The county is committed to being...

- Inclusive and collaborative
- Diverse and people focused
- Responsive and adaptive
- Transparent and accountable
- Racially just
- Focused upstream and where needs are greatest

Chapter 2: Community engagement, vision, and guiding principles

County planners developed the community vision and guiding principles based on community input received during development of two documents: the Community Needs List and the Snoqualmie Valley/Northeast King County Subarea Plan. The community vision is a forward-looking statement of how the community wants to be over the next 20 years.

Community Vision Statement

Snoqualmie Valley/Northeast King County is characterized by strong rural communities with distinct cultures and histories, where people and businesses are thriving, the natural environment and agricultural lands are conserved and protected, farms are preserved, the community is resilient to climate change, and services and programs are accessible to residents in a way that preserves the unique rural character.

This chapter includes the guiding principles that informed and directed the development of the Subarea Plan Public Review Draft. It provides a brief description of the different phases of community engagement.

Chapter 3: Subarea description

This chapter describes the physical features and population of the Snoqualmie Valley/Northeast King County subarea, and lists some of the government agencies and special service districts that serve the area. Snoqualmie Valley/Northeast King County is a rural unincorporated area, which means it is not part of any city and King County serves as its local government. It is the largest subarea in King County, covering 881 square miles. It shares borders with three counties and two incorporated cities on its western edge. It also surrounds five incorporated cities in the rural area, contains two rural towns, and features scenic byways and mountain passes. About 26,000 people live in the area.

The chapter describes the different ways land is being used in the subarea. Almost 90% is used for forestry and agriculture. Recreational tourism is supported by abundant outdoor activities and natural beauty.

The chapter also outlines the area’s history, including the presence of the Tulalip, Snoqualmie, and Muckleshoot tribes, the regional timber industry, and farming in the Snoqualmie Valley.

And it provides information about communities in the subarea today. Compared to King County as a whole, the subarea has larger households, a slightly younger population, and fewer people with disabilities. The median income in the subarea is higher than in the county as a whole, and fewer households live below the poverty line. While more households own their homes, there are more rent-burdened households in the subarea compared to the rest of the county. Fewer households use languages other than English than in the county as a whole.

The chapter outlines government and non-governmental services in the subarea, such as parks districts, three school districts, and community service providers.

Chapter 4: Land use

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

More than half (57%) of the land in the subarea is designated Forestry; 28% is Other Parks/Wilderness, and just over 9% is Rural Area. Open Space and Agricultural land make up 2%, and Rural Towns, Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers, and unincorporated lands designated as Rural Area that lie within a city’s urban growth area make up less than 1% each.

Land use priorities we heard about from community members

- Preserve the rural character of the area by maintaining views, supporting agriculture in the Snoqualmie Valley, and curbing suburban sprawl.
- Some community members told us they support affordable housing for workers and younger people in the subarea.
- In Snoqualmie Pass specifically, create more accommodations for the local workforce through zoning allowances and limit zoning to address concerns about both the environment and natural hazards, such as critical areas and avalanche zones.
- In Fall City specifically, preserve neighborhood aesthetics and update the commercial area special district overlay.

The chapter finishes with six policies designed to protect rural character and scenic views.

Chapter 5: 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 connected, intergenerational, and diverse communities.

Home values across the subarea are increasing substantially, and there is unprecedented demand for affordable housing. There are significant racial and ethnic disparities between owner and renter households in this subarea, with people who identify as “some other race” and Black being least likely to own their own homes. More than a third of renters in the subarea spend more than 30% of their income on housing.

Housing priorities that community members shared

- Maintain the area’s rural character by limiting the intensity and density of housing allowed in most parts of the subarea.

- Build affordable places for young people to live, places for seniors to age in place, and housing that is integrated with services.
- Find ways to make affordable housing available for people who provide services, in the communities they serve—including permanent housing options for workers (especially around Snoqualmie Pass).

The housing section lists four policies that address affordable housing through working with municipalities within and near the subarea and supporting existing programs, middle-income housing, and workforce housing.

Human services priorities shared by community members

- Greater access to human services in the subarea, including improved access to behavioral and mental health services (crises centers and treatment/support for substance abuse).
- More resources for service providers to address rising caseloads and costs as well as limited available workers.
- More resources to address mental health in youths, including services in schools and opportunities for youths to spend time in nature.

This section of the chapter lists two policies intended to support positive health outcomes and supportive services.

Chapter 6: Environment

This chapter describes the ecologically rich and scenic assets that make the subarea so distinctive. Snoqualmie Valley/Northeast King County is the largest and most forested subarea in King County. It boasts scenic byways, wild- and scenic-designated rivers, national forests, designated wilderness areas, ski areas, an agricultural production district, and several other preserved state, county, and private lands.

The chapter describes the subarea’s watersheds and water quality concerns, salmon and watershed planning, and floodplain management. It projects the effects of climate change and implementation plans and programs relevant to the environment, such as the county’s Strategic Climate Action Plan, Flood Hazard Management Plan, and 30-Year Forest Plan.

Environment priorities shared by community members

- Preserve rural character through protection and preservation of the subarea’s forests, rivers, lakes, agricultural valleys, and open spaces.
- Restore natural systems such as rivers for advancing salmon recovery, promotion of reforestation, and more protection for water resources.

- Increase attention to issues associated with climate change, such as more frequent and extreme flooding, agricultural resistance to climate change and natural hazards, reduction of greenhouse gases and waste, and promotion of wildfire resilience.
- Support policies that balance the needs of salmon with those of agricultural land preservation and resilience to flooding.

The chapter lists three policies intended to support environmental protection and mitigation of climate change impacts.

Chapter 7: Parks and open space

This chapter begins with an explanation of how parks and open spaces are managed in unincorporated King County and a description of the lands and facilities.

Seven hundred fifty-six square miles of land in the subarea (86%) is classified as forest production land. Most of the flood plain downstream from Snoqualmie Falls is zoned for agriculture and lies within the 14,931-acre Snoqualmie Agricultural Production District. The subarea also has two scenic byways: the Mountains to Sound Greenway and the Stevens Pass Greenway. The subarea is also home to a range of parks, trails, riverfront natural areas, and recreation opportunities on the Snoqualmie and Skykomish rivers. Fishing, hiking, horseback riding, kayaking, and mountain biking are popular. King County owns 42 local and regional parks and five trails in the subarea.

The chapter describes the two metropolitan park districts in the subarea as well as plans and programs relevant to parks and open space, including Conservation Futures, the Open Space Plan, and the King County Parks Levy.

Community members note that parks and open space are key factors in why they choose to live in the subarea.

Parks and open space priorities shared by community members

- Promote greater access to natural lands, especially river access and facilities for camping on public lands, while preserving views and environmental integrity.
- Focus attention on trailhead crowding along the I-90 corridor, protection of the environment while maintaining access in these areas, and protection of community amenities such as historic landmarks and natural resources.
- Add more parks, playgrounds, and other recreational facilities for the rural towns of Fall City and Snoqualmie Pass, and more parks and recreation programming throughout the subarea. Regional coordination on trail networks and large undeveloped areas.

- The Snoqualmie and Tulalip tribes both expressed concern about trailhead crowding and general overuse of outdoor recreational areas. Both tribes said current levels of use interfere with their access to ancestral lands.

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

Chapter 8: **Transportation**

This chapter describes the profound effect transportation networks have on the quality of peoples’ lives and on the economy. They provide access to jobs, education, services, recreation, and other destinations. The chapter explains that highways, county roads, and transit in the subarea connect King County to neighboring counties; link rural area cities and towns to one another and to employment centers to the west; carry freight from farms and other resource-based businesses to markets in the Pacific Northwest and beyond; and provide residents with critical access to programs and services in urban King County.

The chapter describes the services and facilities managed by King County Road Services as well as state highways and public transportation services in the subarea.

Transportation priorities shared by community members

- Increase infrastructure for active transportation, such as bike lanes, shoulders, and sidewalks.
- Improve safety and enhance maintenance of rural roadways, bridges, shoulders, and ditches. Maintain area roadways that are deteriorating due to heavy truck traffic and traffic congestion from recreationists, such as near popular trailheads. Address seasonal flooding and occasional landslides that cause road closures, cutting off residents from the surrounding cities and impeding emergency services.
- Increase transit, especially routes to connect residents with employers in the south end of the subarea. Resolve mobility challenges such as barriers to transit for youth, seniors, and customers with limited physical mobility. Provide better access to health and human services in the area and in surrounding cities

The chapter ends with five policies to right-size mobility solutions and support a safe and encouraging environment for walking, transit use, and biking.

Chapter 9: **Services and utilities**

Chapter 9 explains that the subarea includes both urban areas—the urban growth area adjacent to cities in the valley—and rural areas. The cities are the primary providers of services

in the urban growth area and may provide certain services to neighboring rural areas. Community members in the rural areas generally receive services and utilities from special-purpose districts or private companies.

The chapter explains who provides utilities (water, sewage treatment and disposal, solid waste, energy, and telecommunications) and services (public school districts and public hospital districts), and notes that the business district in Fall City will soon be served by a large on-site septic system to address long-standing issues with wastewater management.

Services and utilities priorities shared by community members

- Increase access to reliable internet service for those who are not currently served and those who are underserved.
- Create a resilient power grid. Plan for peaks in demand for electricity and emergency services for Snoqualmie Pass and other popular recreation areas.
- In Fall City specifically, do not expand the large on-site sewage system beyond what is currently planned.
- In the unincorporated areas around Skykomish specifically, improve access to solid-waste services.

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

Chapter 10: Economic development

This chapter describes the business community and employment in Snoqualmie Valley/Northeast King County. Agriculture and local businesses are the backbone of the rural economy and contribute to the area’s quality of life and vitality.

The chapter notes that while some forestry and mining still happen, they are at much lower levels than in the past. There are three designated commercial areas, and each of the cities in the Snoqualmie Valley has its own commercial area. The largest employment sector in the subarea is government, followed by services, construction/resources, warehousing, transportation, and utilities.

Economic development priorities shared by community members

- Increase support for local agriculture, including resilience to changes posed by extreme weather events, and improve connections between local growers and markets.
- Support policies that help local businesses thrive while keeping the rural scale of existing commercial areas.

- Preserve and protect resource-based economies while encouraging tourism in ways that maintain the area’s rural character and protect natural resources.

The chapter ends with six policies to support economic and other community development.

Chapter 11: Implementation

This chapter includes actions and measures King County will take to realize the community vision and policies in the plan. Actions taken with adoption of the plan include amendments to the county’s land use and zoning maps along with new and revised development conditions for the subarea. Future action items include ongoing work with the Community Needs List and performance measures to monitor implementation of the subarea plan.

The chapter lists specific changes to land use and zoning maps, transportation studies, and economic development policies. The chapter also includes information about next steps for the Community Needs List and budgeting. Finally, the chapter includes performance measures for implementing the subarea plan.

Appendices

The Snoqualmie Valley/Northeast King County Subarea Plan Public Review Draft has three appendices. Appendix A is a collection of maps and tables that were used to develop the plan. Appendix B is an Equity Impact Review that seeks to identify, evaluate, and communicate potential impacts – both positive and negative – associated with the development and implementation of the plan, following the process outlined in the King County Equity Impact Review Tool. Appendix C includes detail on community engagement for the plan.

Land use and zoning map amendments

When the Snoqualmie Valley/NE King County Subarea Plan is sent to the King County Council, it will be accompanied by the following recommended land use and zoning map amendments.

Open Space Expansion Map Amendment

Amends the Comprehensive Plan designation of parcels acquired by King County for inclusion in the King County Open Space System. This designation indicates the long-term intended use of these properties for environmental protection, wildlife habitat, and outdoor recreation.

Forest Land Increase Map Amendment

Amends the Comprehensive Plan designation of parcels owned by Washington State public agencies from Rural Area to Forestry and Other Parks/Wilderness. This designation indicates

their long-term use as part of a contiguous and functional open space system that includes natural areas, working resource lands, recreation, and trail and wildlife habitat corridors.

Land Use Designation and Zoning Classification Alignment Map Amendment

Aligns the land use designations and zoning classifications of unincorporated land in the Snoqualmie Valley/Northeast King County Community Service Area by amending several parcels.

Preston Mill and Neighborhood Business Map Amendment

Amends the zoning on part of one parcel and removes several overlapping development conditions from parcels east of the Preston-Fall City Road SE that are on or adjacent to the former Preston Mill site in the rural unincorporated area of Preston.

Preston Industrial Map Amendment

Updates and consolidates P-suffix development conditions applying to the Preston industrial area by removing development conditions that no longer apply to parcels and amending development conditions to cover applicable landscaping, open space, and utility provisions from repealed development conditions. One parcel zoning designation is amended to reflect the presence of a King County park.

Weyerhaeuser Snoqualmie Mill Development Condition

Amends land use classifications to reflect acquisitions for King County Open Space System. Removes a development condition that requires joint planning between King County and the city of Snoqualmie, as most of this area has been annexed by the city. Other zoning and land use amendments to better reflect current conditions.

Raging River Quarry Development Condition

This amendment changes the land use designation from Mineral to Open Space and removes a development condition for one parcel. The development condition is amended to be consistent with current codes and King County department references.

Grand Ridge Development Condition

Amends the land use designation and zoning development conditions of several parcels to reflect adoption into the King County Open Space System or ownership by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, and to remove references to the East Sammamish Community Plan and other policies that no longer apply to the area due to annexations and existing development.

Snoqualmie Pass Microhousing and Viewshed Protection Map Amendment

Amends zoning classification and development conditions on the rural town of Snoqualmie Pass by expanding a required landscape buffer on portions of parcels abutting Interstate 90 from 25 feet to 100 feet and including this area in the Alternative Housing Demonstration Project Area.

Fall City Residential Development Condition

Establishes a new property-specific development condition in the rural town of Fall City to maintain the predominant development pattern and make sure that new development is consistent with existing rural levels of service in Fall City’s residential areas.

Fall City Industrial Development Condition

This amendment revises the text of a development condition to acknowledge the longstanding use as legal use of the industrial property while maintaining development conditions that ensure its compatibility with the nearby residential and commercial areas.

Rural Forest Demonstration Project Area

Removes the Rural Forest Demonstration Project Area overlay from applicable parcels. The demonstration project has expired and is proposed for repeal in the King County Code. This map amendment conforms with that change.

North Bend Rural Lot Clustering

Amends the zoning on parcels east of North Bend by removing development conditions that require clustering of future residential development of the parcels. Rural clustering is still permitted on the parcels if future development occurs.

Highway Oriented Development Condition

Repeals a development condition regarding highway-oriented development for an area annexed by the city of North Bend.

Annexed Development Conditions

Repeals several development conditions on parcels annexed by city of North Bend.