



Community Development

Kitsap County 2025 Year of the Rural

Project Charter

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Updates

- Presented to the Board of County Commissioners 12/23/24
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Executive Summary

Project Purpose

The "Year of the Rural" project aims to update and enhance rural planning and policies in Kitsap County. It focuses on three key deliverables: the Rural and Resource Lands Chapter Update, Rural Land Use Reclassification, and Rural Code Updates.

1. **Rural and Resource Lands Chapter Update:** This chapter update will amend the 2024 Comprehensive plan and guide land use decisions for unincorporated Kitsap County, emphasizing the preservation of rural character and appropriate designation of rural and resource activities. It will be aligned with the updated Comprehensive Plan and county-wide policies.
2. **Rural Land Use Reclassification:** Reclassification requests, deferred from the 2024 Comprehensive Plan update, will be processed in 2025 as Site Specific Amendments following Kitsap County Title 21 Land Use and Development Procedures, [Chapter 21.08](#).
3. **Rural Code Updates:** Kitsap County's zoning codes will be reviewed and updated if necessary to accommodate evolving priorities, ensuring regulation of land development in line with rural preservation and evolving economic and housing demands.

Key milestones

- **December 2024:** Project Charter and Engagement Plan presentation
- **January 2025:** Project Kick-off
- **February/March 2025:** Community Engagement
- **June 2025:** 30% project update
- **September-October 2025:** 60% draft review and public comment and hearing
- **November 2025:** 90% draft and final public hearing
- **December 2025:** Target adoption

Community Engagement

Community feedback is crucial to the project. The engagement plan includes a website, internal review team, surveys, interviews, presentations, and public comment to gather input at various stages of the project, ensuring alignment with residents' perspectives.

Conclusion

The Year of the Rural project will significantly impact the future of rural Kitsap County,

ensuring its land use policies, codes, and regulations are updated to reflect both evolving needs and the preservation of rural character.

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Project Purpose

The Year of the Rural initial phase will focus on three deliverables including Rural and Resource Lands Chapter update, Rural Land Use Reclassification, and rural code updates.

Rural and Resource Lands Chapter Update

The Rural and Resource Lands Chapter guides land use patterns and directs land use decisions for the unincorporated portions of Kitsap County outside of urban growth areas. Together, the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan and this chapter form the basis for all future land use patterns and decisions. The policies in this chapter work will work in tandem with the 2024 Kitsap County Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Map.

The purpose of the Rural and Resource Lands Chapter is to define and provide policy direction to preserve and enhance the rural character of Kitsap County. This chapter designates areas in Kitsap County as appropriate for rural and resource activities, both residential and non-residential. The Plan intends to preserve and protect rural character by providing a definition of rural character in Kitsap County and establishing measures to preserve it.

Legislature finds that in defining its rural element under RCW 36.70A.070(5), a county should foster land use patterns and develop a local vision of rural character that will: Help preserve rural-based economies and traditional rural lifestyles; encourage the economic prosperity of rural residents; foster opportunities for small-scale, rural-based employment and self-employment; permit the operation of rural-based agricultural, commercial, recreational, and tourist businesses that are consistent with existing and planned land use patterns; be compatible with the use of the land by wildlife and for fish and wildlife habitat; foster the private stewardship of the land and preservation of open space; and enhance the rural sense of community and quality of life. [RW 36.70A.011](#)

Rural Land Use Reclassification

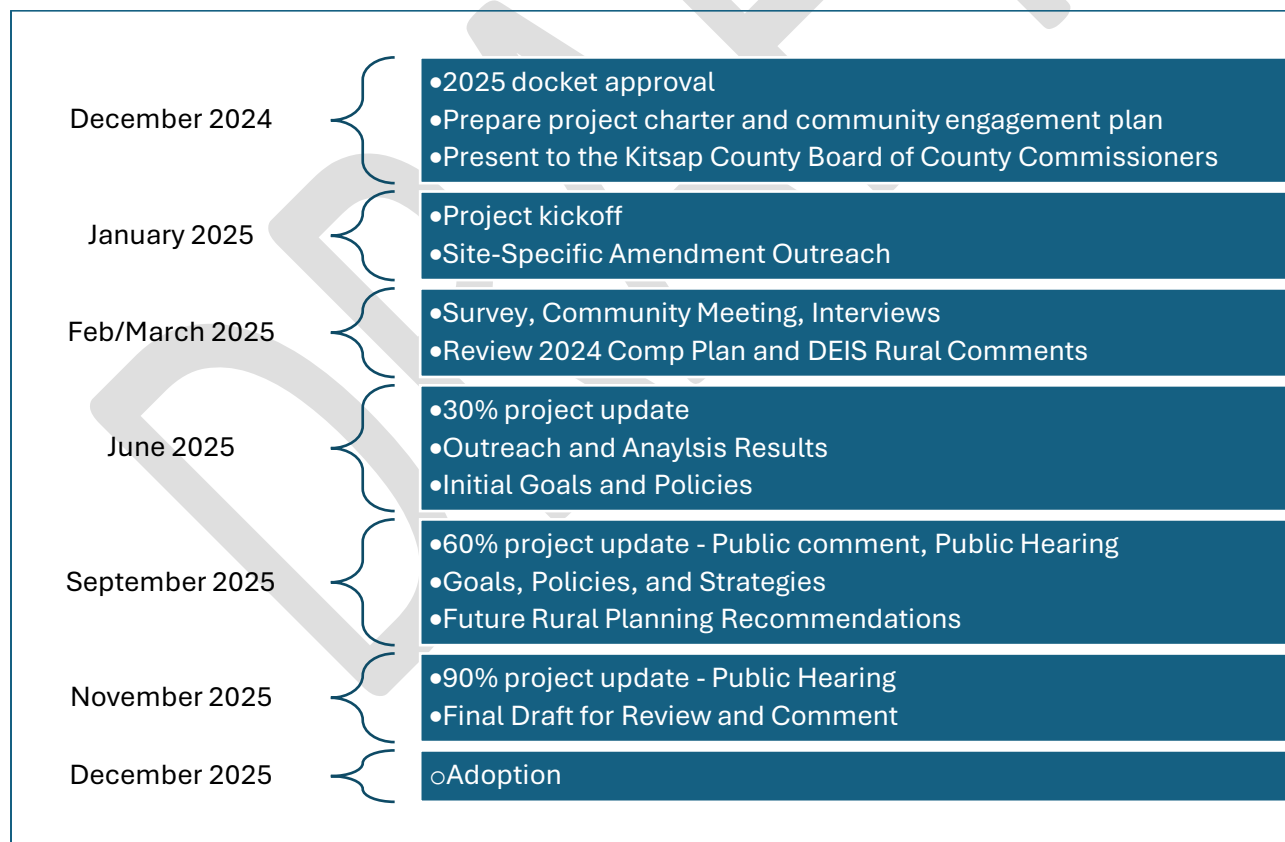
A site-specific amendment can change land uses allowed on a parcel (e.g., residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, and institutional). Requests were submitted during the 2024 Comp Plan update, and rural-to-rural reclassifications were deferred to 2025.

Rural Code Update

As priorities change and evolve, code such as zoning also needs to change and evolve. Zones classify, designate, and regulate the development of land for agriculture, forest, mineral resource extractions, residential, commercial, industrial, and public land uses. The Year of the Rural will focus on key areas and review code for potential updates.

Project Background and Framework

The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) requires cities and counties to create and update Comprehensive Plans and implementing development regulations every 10 years ([RCW 36.70A.130](#)). Comprehensive Plans are 20-year policy documents that guide and plan for growth (population and employment), housing, transportation, capital facilities and utilities, parks, **recreation and open space, rural areas, and protection of natural resource lands** ([RCW 36.70A.070](#)). The planning window for this update is 2024-2044. The recently completed 2021 [Buildable Lands Report](#) provides foundational information for growth planning. In addition to meeting GMA requirements, Kitsap County has regional planning requirements through [Vision 2050](#) (Vision). Vision's multicounty planning policies and regional growth strategy guides growth planning for the county and cities within the county and is implemented through the recently amended [Countywide Planning Policies](#) (CPP). **Insert additional or different information related to rural. Mention Title 21.108 for reclassification requests.**



2025 Rural and Resource Lands Chapter Timeline

Approach

Rural and Resource Lands Chapter Update

Gap Analysis

A gap analysis will be completed to review all the requirements related to rural planning. Identified gaps between the 2012 rural and resources chapter, 2016 comprehensive plan, 2024 comprehensive plan, and updates to state laws, regional, and countywide policy documents. See a list of plans, legislation, and case law in [Appendix A](#).

Land Use Analysis

Land use analysis will be conducted in rural Kitsap County to inventory and review the following, but not limited to, rural communities; compact rural areas; rural land distribution/inventory; mineral resource overlays; open space; natural resource land use; public facility lands; commercial land use; and industrial land use.

Land use analysis will also be conducted for focus areas including, but not limited to, in-home childcare, manufactured and mobile home parks, energy siting, and agricultural land uses.

Community Engagement

Community engagement will play a critical role in the Rural and Resource Lands Chapter Update planning efforts. The outreach process will be carried out in three phases:

- Phase 1: Initial outreach to assess a rural vision update, gather community input on focus areas, and collect information for future planning beyond the 2025 scope.
- Phase 2: Mid-project outreach to share draft goals, policies, strategies, and code updates. Share and present 60% complete draft of the Chapter.
- Phase 3: Present the 90% complete draft of the Chapter.

A Community Engagement Plan was drafted for the Rural and Resource Lands Chapter and will guide County staff in gathering feedback and ideas related to planning initiatives. See [Appendix C](#) for more information in the Community Engagement Plan.

Review and Research

Comments obtained during the 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update and other related reports such as “In Our Hands: The Future of Farming in Kitsap County,” April 2023, by Kitsap Farmland Preservation Working Group will be reviewed.

Additional, research will be conducted to identify current trends and best practices and goals, policies, strategies, and potential code updates are developed.

Internal Review Team

An internal review team (IRT) composed of Kitsap County staff from department and divisions engaged in work impacting unincorporated Kitsap County. The IRT will aid in assessing scope, data and data analysis review, code update review, and goals, policies, and strategies review, and review of the final report.

Iterative Updates

The Rural and Resource Lands Chapter Update will be developed and shared in a 30% draft status, and a 60% draft status, as described in the Community Engagement Plan, to allow for ample feedback from the Internal Review Team, the community, Kitsap County Planning Commission, and Kitsap County Board of Commissioners.

Goals, Policies, and Strategies

Goals, policies, and strategies will be updated or removed during the update process. Also, based on review, research, analysis, and feedback, additional goals, etc. will be created.

Rural Land Use Reclassification

During the 2024 Comprehensive Plan update, when adopting the preferred alternative, the Board of Commissioners determined that all rural-to-rural requests will be deferred to a 2025+ process. This only applied to those requests that were already submitted and were considered in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The County will not be accepting any new land use reclassification requests in 2025.

See **Appendix B** for the process for the rural reclassification requests and the site-specific amendment application steps.

Rural Code Update

As needed, updates to Kitsap County code will be proposed for potential adoption.

Outcomes

State and Regional Outcomes

1. Meet Growth Management Act (GMA) requirements for the Plan update as outlined in [RCW 36.70A.130](#), [WAC 365-196](#) and the [Department of Commerce Periodic Update Checklist for Fully-Planning Counties](#)

2. Consistency with Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC) Vision 2050/Centers Framework and the [PSRC Plan Review Manual](#)
3. Consistency with the [Kitsap Countywide Planning Policies](#)
4. Update development regulations if necessary to ensure consistency with updated policies

Local Outcomes

6. Create a user-friendly easy to navigate, yet comprehensive chapter, drawing heavily from earlier versions of the Rural and Resource Chapter that was removed in 2016.
7. A robust community engagement program that uses multiple virtual and in-person methods
8. Policies that are easy to navigate
9. Policies that meet state and regional requirements through the lens of local circumstances and emergent issues (e.g. rural character and preservation)
10. Land use code updates that address evolving needs while maintaining rural character and environmental preservation
11. Plan and goals that are aspirational yet rooted in fiscal responsibility
12. Conduct and provide a rural and resource lands analysis and provide timely and relevant recommendations
13. Protect housing appropriate for rural communities and prevent displacement
14. Define and provide policy direction to preserve and enhance the rural character of Kitsap County

Deliverables

The Year of the Rural will provide the following deliverable:

- Rural and Resource Lands Chapter Update
- Rural Land Use Reclassifications
- Rural Code Updates, if applicable

Scope of Work

1. Rural and Resource Lands Chapter Update

- 1.1. Rural Vision and Character
- 1.2. Community Engagement
- 1.3. Data Analysis, Review, and Research
 - 1.3.1. Review previous Rural Plans, New Legislation and Case Law
 - 1.3.2. Rural and Resource Inventory, Review, and/or Analysis
 - 1.3.2.1. Rural Lands
 - 1.3.2.2. Resource Lands
 - 1.3.2.3. Rural Population Forecast
 - 1.3.2.4. Rural Economies
 - 1.3.2.5. Rural Public Facilities and Services
 - 1.3.2.6. Rural Areas and Planning by Watershed
 - 1.3.3. Rural Land Use*
 - 1.3.3.1. Mineral Resources
 - 1.3.3.2. Agriculture Policy and Code Review – Barriers and Policy Improvements
 - 1.3.3.3. Energy Siting Assessment – Demand and Zoning
 - 1.3.3.4. Boundary Line Adjustment Stakeholders Discussion
 - 1.3.3.5. Open Space Law – Utilization and Barriers
 - 1.3.4. Rural Economy*
 - 1.3.4.1. Childcare Assessment – In-home, Barriers and Opportunities
 - 1.3.4.2. Agriculture Rural Events and Businesses – Code Improvements
 - 1.3.5. Rural Housing*
 - 1.3.5.1. Mobile and Manufactured Home Parks Review
- 1.4. Update Goals, Policies, and Strategies
 - 1.4.1. Update Rural and Resource Lands Chapter
 - 1.4.2. Review and move related information from other elements
- 1.5. Prepare Ordinance
- 1.6. Implementation Plan

2. Rural Land Use Reclassification

3. Rural Code Updates

*Topics identified at focus areas through Comp Plan process or Board of County Commissioners.

Project Schedule

GANNT Chart

	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Outreach and Project Management													
Charter													
Engagement Plan													
Board Presentation													
Kick-Off Meeting(s)													
Rural Vision													
Website													
Survey													
Interviews													
Presentations													
Rural and Resource Lands Chapter Update													
Gap Analysis													
Data Analysis, Review, and Research													
30% Complete													
Goals, Policies, and Strategies													
60% Complete													
90% Complete													
Final Report and Ordinance													
Rural Reclassifications													
Application follow-up													
Internal Review													
Staff Report, SEPA, and Public Notice													
PC Review													
BOC Review and Adoption													
Code Updates													
Draft Code for Public Comment													
Final Draft Code													
PC Review													
Board Review and Target Adoption													

Milestones

- December 2024 – Project Charter and Community Engagement Plan
- January 2025 – Project Kick-off
- June 2025 – 30% Project Update
- September 2024 – 60% Project Update
- November 2024 – 90% Project Update

Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Person	General Responsibilities	Project Responsibilities
DCD Director	Rafe Wysham	DCD coordination, oversight, communication with Board of Commissioners	Review at major milestones
Project Director	Scott Diener	Scope, direction, liaison to leadership, staffing and capacity	Boundary Line Adjustment
Project Manager	Colin Poff	Oversight, big picture, communication with other levels, interim deadlines, accountability to work plans	Rural Reclassification, Mineral Overlay Assessment, Code Updates Review
Project Administrator and Lead	Heather Cleveland	Managing day-to-day project tasks, develop and maintain project relationships, regular progress reports	Outreach Engagement, Policy Review, Data Assessment and Analysis Coordination, Draft Goals, Policies, and Strategies
Topic Lead	Jim Rogers	Technical support and review	Rural Visioning and Economy
Topic Lead	New Planner	Technical support and review	Rural Housing
Technical Assistance	Current Planner	Review of draft code and technical support. Review other code examples (e.g. Jefferson County)	Advise on Ag. Code, Rural Energy Siting, Other Code and Policy
Data Analyst	Cindy Read	Data analysis, maps, and graphics	Rural Reclassification, Mineral Resource Overlay, Rural and Resource Lands Analysis

Organization and Internal Communication

Project Team Meetings will occur weekly or as needed, see the “Roles and Responsibilities” table for the Project Team member list. Internal Review Team (IRT) will meet three times throughout the project. Project progress will be tracked using Microsoft Teams Planner.

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Appendix A: Policy, Plans, Legislature, and Case Law Review List

The GMA requires that “Each comprehensive land use plan and development regulations shall be subject to continuing review and evaluation by the county or city that adopted them.” ([RCW 36.70A.130\(1\)\(a\)](#)). Plan updates are not intended to be a wholesale re-writes of the existing Plan.

The Plan update will focus on achieving consistency with multicounty planning policies and the regional growth strategy contained in [VISION 2050 Multicounty Planning Policies](#) and [Kitsap Countywide Planning Policies](#).

Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) were updated to implement Vision 2050 and many of the changes to the GMA since the last update. The CPPs contain population and employment targets that were utilized in the preferred alternative as part of the Comprehensive Plan update. The growth targets adopted within the CPPs are consistent with the regional growth strategy.

The following represents the Washington State Department of Commerce, [Rural Element checklist](#):

- Consistent with [RCW 36.70A.070\(5\)](#), [RCW 36.70A.011](#), [RCW 36.70A.030 \(15, 16 and 17\)](#), and should consider [WAC 365-196-425](#). Rural lands are lands not included in urban growth areas or designated as agricultural, forest, or mineral resource lands.
- Complete a rural element that:
 - Establish patterns of rural densities and uses considering local circumstances, including a written record explaining how the rural element harmonizes the planning goals of the GMA and meets the requirements of [RCW 36.70A.070\(5\)](#);
 - Allows rural development, forestry and agriculture in rural areas;
 - Provides for a variety of rural densities, uses, essential public facilities and rural governments services; and
 - Includes measures that apply to rural development and protects the rural character of the area.
 - Establishes policies for Limited Areas of More Intense Rural Development (LAMIRDs). [RCW 36.70A.070\(5\)](#), amended in 2024 ([SSB 6140](#)) [RCW 36.70A.030 \(15, 16 and 17\)](#), [WAC 365-196-425](#)

- Note: this subsection shall not be interpreted to permit in the rural area a major industrial development or a master planned resort unless otherwise specifically permitted under [RCW 36.70A.360](#) and [RCW 36.70A.365](#)
- Policies that limit urban services in rural areas. RCW 36.70A.110(4) amended in 2021
 - Note: The plan may include optional techniques such as limited areas of more intensive rural development (LAMIRDs), clustering, density transfer, design guidelines, and conservation easements to accommodate rural uses not characterized by urban growth as specified in [RCW 36.70A.070\(5\)\(b\), \(d\)](#) amended in 2021 ([SB 5275](#)), [WAC 365-196-425\(4\)](#).

The following represents some of the state law changes which have occurred during the 2021-2022 and 2023-2024 legislative sessions (search for other state law changes):

- 2021-2022 [HB 1717](#) adds new requirements to [RCW 36.70A.040](#) regarding tribal participation in planning efforts with local and regional jurisdictions.
- 2021-2022 [SB 5275](#) amends RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d) enhancing opportunity in limited areas of more intense rural development (LAMIRDs).
- 2023-2024 [SB 5198](#): Promoting the preservation of mobile home communities and affordable housing.
 - To address concerns about the loss of existing affordable housing, SB 5198 strengthens rules to give mobile homeowners (or a qualified tenant organization) the opportunity to purchase mobile home communities when the park owners propose closure or conversion. The new law includes the various procedural steps and timelines that the mobile home community owners must take to comply.
- Legislation Source: [MRSC - 2023 Planning Legislation Impacting Local Governments](#)
- State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). Zoning changes to allow accessory uses in agricultural zones require a comprehensive SEPA review.
 - [King County v. Friends of Sammamish Valley](#) (9/19/2024) – The Washington State Supreme Court reversed a court of appeals (CoA) decision ([King County v. Friends of Sammamish Valley](#) (2023)). The CoA had reversed a Growth Management Hearings Board decision invalidating a city ordinance because the ordinance did not properly consider potential environmental impacts. The Supreme Court re-instated the Board’s decision, finding that the Board did establish sufficient facts showing that the County failed to consider potential environmental impacts in its SEPA checklist.
- Case Law Source: [MRSC - Recent Court Decisions of Interest to Local Governments](#)
- Consistency with recently updated plans

- [Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Plan: WRIA 15 Kitsap Watershed](#), revised December 2024
- [Kitsap Natural Resources Asset Management Program \(KNRAMP\)](#)

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Attachment B: Rural Reclassification Request

2024 Comp Plan Reclassification Request Process

1. Early 2022. Application created with questions that align with KCC 21.08.
2. Aug-October 2022. Application form open.
3. Analysis of applications – and alternative(s) and no alternative determination.
4. December 15, 2023. Draft Environmental Impact Statement published that included analysis of each alternative with proposed reclassification requests.
5. April 24, 2024. Preferred Alternative selected that included specific reclassification requests that matched growth management approach and targets for housing, employment, and population. Board directed to defer rural-to-rural requests to 2025+ process.
6. December 2, 2024. Staff Report was included which lists reclassification requests that were included, not included, or deferred.

2025 Follow-through Communications (use rural deferral as a starting point)

1. Included

- a. Letter Types
 - i. Application - Emails
 - ii. Staff/City of Bremerton Initiated - Letters
- b. Receiving the letter
 - i. Applicant (when applicable) and property owner
 - ii. Property Owner (County & City initiated)
- c. Information to include
 - i. Property Owner
 - ii. Parcel number(s)
 - iii. Current Zoning
 - iv. New Zoning
 - v. UGA Expansion, if applicable
- d. Property tax implementations (check with the assessor's office)

2. Not Included

- a. Email
- b. Not in the preferred alternative.
- c. Reclassification request was “not included” and the Board of County Commissioners is no longer considering the reclassification request.
- d. Link to the decision table in the Dec 2 staff report.

- e. To be considered for Site Specific Rural Reclassification in the future, apply during the open application window when designated in the future. This window will not be open in 2025, but the Board may decide that in the future.
- f. Two types
 - i. Included in an alternative.
 - ii. Not included, no chance.

3. Rural Deferral

- a. Application is part of the rural deferral process.
- b. Ask to opt in/out
- c. If opt in, confirm by opting in by X date two weeks after email sent. If opt out, please communicate also by contacting us.
 - i. Move forward with all
- d. For those that opt in, assess your applications against requirements for Site Specific Reclassification Requests as described in 21.08.
- e. Explain shift from consideration in the comprehensive plan to site-specific application process in the Rural and Resource Lands Chapter Update.
- f. Request additional information.
- g. Offer meeting opportunities with DCD staff
 - i. Create appointment form.
- h. Analysis
 - i. Upzone analysis for Rural Protected and Rural Wooded.
 - 1. Such as nearby zones, GMA
 - 2. See the assessment sheets for application and determination.
 - ii. Review and assess applications.
- i. SEPA determination and public noticing
 - i. Issue SEPA determination and notify property owners with 800 feet. Consider additional noticing as needed (website, etc.)
 - ii. Notify applicants of status of their application and upcoming opportunity to testify.
- j. Prepare staff report with analysis, review, and recommendation for the Planning Commission and the BOCC.
- k. Final determination by BOCC.
- l. Notify Applicants

Attachment C: Community Engagement Plan

Community Engagement Plan

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