

Kitsap County: Year of the Rural

Code Review and Assessment Report

May 30, 2025

Prepared by:

Heather Cleveland

Introduction	3
Active Evaluation	3
Agriculture	3
Rural Business - Child Care.....	6
Rural Business – Events.....	8
Energy Siting	9
Rural Wooded Setbacks	10
Boundary Line Adjustments.....	10
Future Review	10
Agritourism	10
Rural Business and Land Use Compatibility.....	11
Rural Zones	11
Legislative Action Process	11
Legislative Updates	11

Introduction

This report provides a summary of potential code updates under consideration for Kitsap County, focusing on rural and resource lands. The document is divided into two main sections: Active Evaluation and Future Review.

The Active Evaluation section includes an introduction to the issues currently being assessed, an analysis of relevant data and policy considerations, and outlines proposed next steps.

The Future Review section identifies topics that have been flagged for future review, providing a summary of each issue to ensure they remain visible for upcoming planning cycles.

The report concludes with an overview of recent legislative updates that may influence policy and regulatory changes affecting rural and resource lands in Kitsap County.

Code updates will be proposed in September 2025, after further evaluation, for the public comment period before final adoption.

Active Evaluation

Agriculture

Introduction

Kitsap County is the only county in the State of Washington that does not have Agriculture Resource Land Zoning. Using information from the April 2023 “The Future of Farming in Kitsap County” Report by Kitsap Farmland Preservation Working Group¹, after the 1992 decision that “there was insufficient commercial farming in Kitsap to justify designating a commercial agricultural zone” a period of subdividing occurred, and between 1997 and 2017 the number of farms over 50 acres declined 54% while during the same period the number of farms with an average size of 1-9 acres increased 53%.

Additionally, since the Agriculture Code was initially adopted in 2016, there are opportunities for clarity and improvement to increase economic viability of agriculture in Kitsap County.

We are assessing agriculture resource lands for potential protection and also reviewing the Kitsap County Agriculture Code for opportunities to improve economic viability of agriculture businesses.

Existing Conditions

Agriculture primary use currently allowed in all rural residential and resource zones.

¹ [The Future of Farming in Kitsap County](#)

Table 1: Kitsap County Agriculture Use Permissibility

Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designation	Zone Classification	Map Symbol	Permissibility
Rural Residential	Rural Residential	RR	P
Rural Protection	Rural Protection	RP	P
Rural Wooded	Rural Wooded	RW	P
Forest Resource Lands	Forest Resource Lands	FRL	P
Mineral Resource	Mineral Resource Overlay	MRO	P
Urban Low-Density Residential	Urban Restricted	UR	P (2) / --
	Greenbelt	GB	P
	Urban Low Residential	UL	-- (1)
	Urban Cluster Residential	UCR	-- (1)
Urban Medium-Density Residential	Urban Medium Residential	UM	--
Urban High-Density Residential	Urban High Residential	UH	--
Urban Low Intensity Commercial	Urban Village Center	UVC	--
	Neighborhood Commercial	NC	--
Urban High Intensity Commercial	Commercial	C	--
	Regional Center	RC	--
	Low Intensity Commercial	LIC	--
Rural Commercial	Rural Commercial	RCO	-- (1)
Urban and Rural Industrial	Business Park	BP	P
	Business Center	BC	P
	Industrial	IND	P
	Rural Industrial	RI	P
Public Facilities	Parks	P	P

Source: [Chapter 17.455 AGRICULTURE CODE](#)

According to the 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture², Kitsap County has 570 farms, down 18% from 2017 with 9,539 acres of land in farm (2% increase from 2017) and a 105% increase from 2017 in market value of products sold to \$13,572,000. However, with the increase income is an increase in total farm production expenses to \$25,780,000.

Analysis

² [2022 Census of Agriculture Kitsap County Profile](#)

Analysis of agriculture land use characteristics along with complimentary assets (County Roads) or incompatible uses (Urban Growth Areas) is underway to define potential Agricultural Resource Overlay Zones. Along with the mapping aspect, a program and process will be researched and proposed.

Next Steps

1. Continue to discuss and assess Farm Management best practices and animal density requirements. Consider consulting an outside entity – Kitsap Conservation District may have recommendations.
2. Review and evaluate recent agriculture survey led by Kitsap County Agriculture Alliance and Comprehensive Plan analysis conducted by Kitsap Farmland Preservation Coalition.
3. Assess potential Agriculture Overlay Zones and previously proposed Farm Focus Areas.
4. Assess Historic Farms Designation.
5. Review and assess proposed code updates with Kitsap County Internal Review Team.

Code Section	Title	Agriculture Community Proposals (not initiated by DCD)
17.415.020	Shipping Container	Exempt shipping container prohibitions on farms. We may need to do more to have them blend in or be out of sight, but containers are by far the most cost-effective means of providing multiple types of solutions on farms.
17.415.020	Heavy Equipment	Exempt farm equipment from consideration as “Heavy Equipment” when the property is a farm.
17.455.060	Service Containers	Remove the requirement that limits alcoholic beverage service containers to 4 ounces in tasting rooms. If the county permits serving four 4-ounce pours (16 ounces total), there's effectively no difference from a single 16-ounce pour. Maintaining this rule adds unnecessary dishwashing for businesses seeking to avoid disposable containers, without serving a meaningful regulatory purpose.
NEW 14.###	Agriculture Structures	Kitsap County should adopt an inspection fee schedule to help determine whether an agricultural structure built to KCC Title 14 Building Construction standards can be exempt from an occupancy permit. This would apply to buildings intended for public access related to agricultural activities such as washing, packing, processing, storage, aggregation, and distribution.
17.455.080.B.2.a.	Building Permit Exemption	Currently, agricultural structures are exempt from building permits only if they are 864 square feet or smaller. This size limitation does not support the needs of commercially significant farming. Consider aligning with Jefferson County’s code, which allows for significantly larger agricultural buildings.
17.455.060.A.	Farm Stands	Include clear language in the agricultural code specifying compliance requirements for farm stands. Currently, many farm stands operate out of compliance with Health District regulations due to the lack of a grocery

		permit. This creates a barrier, especially for farms not connected to public water systems or those unable to access them.
--	--	--

Code Section	Title	Kitsap County DCD Proposals
17.455.030	Garden Definition	Develop and adopt a clear definition of “gardens” in the land use code to distinguish them from agricultural activities.
14.455.100	Notifications	Assess the annual notification system to ensure it is a viable path.
17.455.070	Animal Density	Consider adding animal density requirements when the current requirement “Best management practices shall govern animal densities.” is not sufficient.
TBD	Historic Farm Designation	Assess the impact of a potential “Historic Farm Designation” to preserve Kitsap County’s historic farms.
TBD	Agriculture Resource Overlay Zone	In a similar way that a Mineral Resource Overlay is used, can the same model be used for Agriculture Resource Lands.

Code Section	Title	Code Update Request(s)
17.455.030	Rural Commercial – Agriculture Primary Use	Allow “Agriculture Primary Use” in Rural Commercial zones to allow for farm-to-table restaurants.

Rural Business - Child Care

Introduction

Child care access in Kitsap County is a growing concern as the number of providers has declined despite increased capacity, prompting a multi-agency effort to identify and address barriers facing rural child care providers.

Child care was identified in Kitsap County’s 2025 Docket as a priority, and it is being assessed for Rural Kitsap in the Year of the Rural. According to ChildCare Aware of Washington’s March 2024 publication³:

In Kitsap County, the number of child care providers has dropped from 137 with capacity for 4,867 children in 2019, to 131 providers with capacity for 5,365 children in December of 2023.

Kitsap County Department of Community Development (DCD) staff are collaborating with the Kitsap County Child Care Taskforce with representation led by Kitsap Economic Development Alliance and representation from Kitsap County, Olympic College, Washington Communities for Children, U.S. Navy, Kitsap Public Health, and Tree Top Village Early Learning and Child Care to better understand barriers

³ [County Level Data DRAFT - 2-2-2024.xlsx](#)

facing child care providers and work alongside the Taskforce for outreach efforts with Rural Child Care providers.

Existing Conditions

Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designation	Rural Residential	Rural Protection	Rural Wooded	Forest Resource Lands	Mineral Resource Overlay	Urban Low Density Residential				Urban Medium Density Residential	Urban High Density Residential		
Zoning Classification (1)(3)(4) ➡	RR (2)	RP	RW (2)	FRL	MRO	UR (5)	GB (5)	UL (5)	UCR (5)	UM (5)	UH (5)		
Categorical Use (1)(3)(4) ↓	17.130	17.140	17.150	17.160	17.170	17.180	17.190	17.200	17.210	17.220	17.230	Definition ↓	Categorical Use Standards ↓
258 Clinic	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	ACUP	ACUP	17.110.164, Clinic.	17.415.110, Clinic.
260 Day-care center	C	C	--	--	--	ACUP	ACUP	ACUP	ACUP	P	P	17.110.200, Day-care center.	17.415.140, Day-care center.
262 Day-care center, home-based	P	P	--	--	--	P	P	P	P	P	P	17.110.205, Day-care center, home-based.	17.415.145, Day-care center, home-based.

Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designation ➡	Urban High Intensity Commercial			Urban Low Intensity Commercial		Rural Commercial	Urban Industrial		Rural Industrial	Public Facilities		
Zoning Classification (1)(3)(4) ➡	C	RC	LIC	UVC	NC	RCO	BC	IND	RI	P		
Categorical Use (1)(3)(4)(5) ↓	17.240	17.250	17.280	17.260	17.270	17.290	17.300	17.320	17.330	17.340	Definition ↓	Categorical Use Standards ↓
258 Clinic	P	P	P	ACUP	ACUP	ACUP	P	C	--	--	17.110.164, Clinic.	17.415.110, Clinic.
260 Day-care center	P	P	P	P	P	ACUP	ACUP	P	--	ACUP	17.110.200, Day-care center.	17.415.140, Day-care center.
262 Day-care center, home-based	P	P	P	ACUP	P	--	ACUP	--	--	--	17.110.205, Day-care center, home-based.	17.415.145, Day-care center, home-based.

Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designation	TYPE I LAMIRDS									TYPE III LAMIRDS				
Zoning Classification (1)(3)(4) ➡	Keyport Rural Village 17.360A			Manchester LAMIRD 17.360B			Rural Historic LAMIRD 17.360C			Suquamish LAMIRD 17.360D		REC	TTEC	
Categorical Use (1)(3)(4) ↓	KVC	KVL R	KVR	MVC	MVL R	MVR	RHTC (2)	RHTR (2)	RHTW (2)	SVC	SVLR	SVR	17.360E	17.360E
260 Day-care center	P	C	C	P	C	C				P	C	C	P	P
262 Day-care center, home-based	P	P	P	ACUP	P	P				P	P	P	--	--

Analysis/Outreach

DCD staff reviewed a report prepared by Kitsap County Policy Analyst in December 2024 and identified areas for additional review including recommendations for permitting and zoning. After initial review, the following potential updates were identified for further review and discussion.

Code Section	Title	Rural Child Care Code and Zoning Considerations
17.415.275.D.1.	Secondary Use	During operating hours, daycares may take up entire house and is not secondary.
17.415.275.D.4	% Gross Floor Area	Daycares may need to occupy 100% of ground floor.
17.415.275.D.9.	Parking	Define parking for requirements, e.g. “customers may only come to home by appointment and only one additional parking space is required if customers come to the home.
14.415.275.F	New!	Create a new section for In-Home Daycare to describe code where in-home daycares are allowed to deviate from home business code.

Next Steps

1. Assess SB 5545 "Military childcare" legislative update
 - a. Define "near"
 - b. Only applies to County military installations. Define installation – does it need a residential component or only employee component?
2. Assess SB 5655 "Modifying occupancy loads in childcare settings" legislative update.
3. Collaborate with Kitsap County Child Care Taskforce for additional engagement and outreach in July 2025.
4. Assess how "outdoor space" is evaluated in the permitting or licensing process.

Rural Business – Events

Introduction

Code Update Inquiry: Kitsap County Department of Community Development received an inquiry to consider **allowing "Event Facilities" on certain properties in the "Rural Wooded Zone."**

The proposal for certain properties would include a limitation to "large" parcels with historical significance.

Existing Conditions

Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designation	Rural Residential	Rural Protection	Rural Wooded	Forest Resource Lands	Mineral Resource Overlay	Urban Low Density Residential				Urban Medium Density Residential	Urban High Density Residential	Definition ↓	Categorical Use Standards ↓
Zoning Classification (1)(3)(4) ⇒	RR (2)	RP	RW (2)	FRL	MRO	UR (5)	GB (5)	UL (5)	UCR (5)	UM (5)	UH (5)		
Categorical Use (1)(3)(4) ↓	17.130	17.140	17.150	17.160	17.170	17.180	17.190	17.200	17.210	17.220	17.230		
206 Espresso stands	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	P	17.110.267, Espresso stands.	17.415.190, Espresso stands.
208 Event facility	C	C	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	17.110.269, Event facility	17.415.195, Event facility.

Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designation →	Urban High Intensity Commercial			Urban Low Intensity Commercial		Rural Commercial	Urban Industrial		Rural Industrial	Public Facilities	Definition ↓	Categorical Use Standards ↓
Zoning Classification (1)(3)(4) ⇒	C	RC	LIC	UVC	NC	RCO	BC	IND	RI	P		
Categorical Use (1)(3)(4)(5) ↓	17.240	17.250	17.280	17.260	17.270	17.290	17.300	17.320	17.330	17.340		
206 Espresso stands	P	P	P	P	P	ACUP	P	P	ACUP	--	17.110.267, Espresso stands.	17.415.190, Espresso stands.
208 Event facility	ACUP	ACUP	ACUP	ACUP	ACUP	--	--	--	--	ACUP	17.110.269, Event facility.	17.415.195, Event facility.

Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designation	TYPE I LAMIRDS										TYPE III LAMIRDS		Definition ↓	Categorical Use Standards ↓
Zoning Classification (1)(3)(4) ⇒	Keyport Rural Village 17.360A		Manchester LAMIRD 17.360B		Rural Historic LAMIRD 17.360C		Suquamish LAMIRD 17.360D		REC 17.360E		TTEC 17.360E			
Categorical Use (1)(3)(4) ↓	KVC	KVL R	KVR	MVC	MVL R	MVR	RHTC (2)	RHTR (2)	RHTW (2)	SVC	SVLR	SVR		
206 Espresso stands	ACUP	--	--	P	--	--	--	--	--	P	P	--	17.110.267, Espresso stands.	17.415.190, Espresso stands.
208 Event facility	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	17.110.269, Event facility.	17.415.195, Event facility.

17.110.269 "Event facility" means a facility or site where private or public events, such as weddings, musical performances, parties, reunions, fairs, markets, bazaars, retreats, or conferences, are conducted in exchange for compensation and that are not part of a larger venue, such as a hotel, resort, or conference center.

17.415.195 Event facility – Allowed Use Standards

- Number of event participants – outdoor and indoor.
- Number and frequency of events.
- Hours of operation.
- Access, parking, and traffic.
- Landscaping and fencing.
- Noise.

Analysis/Outreach

- Assess proposed use by parcel size and “historic” condition.
- Assess use as currently defined in all RW.
 - Potential parameters: existing building could be a condition (event facility, B&B, farm).
 - Ripple – people buying a 20-acre parcel for wedding venue. Is that a concern?

Next steps

1. Review existing tools
 - a. Temporary events
 - b. Assembly events
2. Assess scale event and impacts:
 - a. Small (<50), Medium, Large Standards
 - b. Charrette with noise, dust, traffic, toilet

Energy Siting

Introduction

As Kitsap County advances its commitment to clean energy and climate resilience, there is a growing need to establish clear land use codes for the siting of alternative energy and battery energy storage systems (BESS), particularly on rural and resource lands. These areas offer unique opportunities for renewable energy development due to their available space and proximity to natural resources, but they also require thoughtful planning to preserve rural character, protect environmental assets, and ensure compatibility with existing land uses. Developing specific code for energy siting in these zones will help guide responsible growth, support local and state climate goals, and provide clarity for both communities and energy developers.

Existing Conditions

TBD

Analysis

TBD

Next Steps

1. Review existing code from City of Sumner.
2. Review guidance from WA Dept. of Commerce.
3. Organize meeting with PSE.
4. Follow up with Snohomish County to better understand their collaboration with SPUD.

5. Define BESS.
6. Define Public Facility.

Rural Wooded Setbacks

Introduction

All single-family buildings on parcels abutting Forest Resource Lands zones and Rural Wooded zones must use a 100' setback on the shared property line(s).

In rural areas, the minimum lot sizes are 5 acres for Rural Residential, 10 acres for Rural Protection, 20 acres for Rural Wooded, 40 acres for Forest Resource Lands, and 20 acres in the Mineral Resource Overlay. However, at one point in history, code allowed smaller lots to be created. Most of these lots are smaller than 1 acre. Their lot widths mean that a 100' setback either entirely encompasses a lot or mostly encompasses a lot, leaving nowhere to reasonably develop a house.

To develop, applicants have to apply for a zoning variance. This creates extra process and expense for them and additional permit intake and review for DCD.

Existing Conditions/Analysis

- Use table in 17.450 establishes minimum lot sizes for all zones
- Footnote 29: One-hundred-foot setback required for single-family buildings abutting FRL or RW zones.
- Could get data for how many variance permits in the past decade have been for this, but honestly one permit is too many for a problem we created ourselves and can solve.

Next Steps

1. In all cases, a zoning variance is approved (because: Supreme Court).
2. Either: Revise the code to make an exception for parcels smaller than <to be determined dimensions>
3. Or: Make this variance approvable under the building permit for impacted parcels
4. Goal: Reduce process for the sake of process

Boundary Line Adjustments

Docket Item: Boundary Line Adjustment code will be discussed and code prepared due to its impact on neighborhoods and private property acquisition.

Future Review

Agritourism

The demand in the State of Washington and Kitsap County for Agritourism has increased significantly in recent years as demand increases, it serves as an opportunity for agriculture business to diversify their income. In 2025, the State of Washington is conducting a [WA State Agri-Tourism Study & Report](#). The conflict exists in the scale of agritourism, the evolution beyond directly supporting agriculture, impact

on the surround areas from, but not limited to, noise, dust, lighting, and parking along with a potential need for more permanent infrastructure or amenable temporary options for restrooms and water while also considering access for health and safety.

Rural Business and Land Use Compatibility

Evaluate the business permitting process. The rural business permitting process is currently complex, leading to fewer applications, whereas the approach in the 1990s was simpler and more effective.

Consider distinguishing between businesses with clients and/or employees and those without, as well as managing impacts such as noise and dust. Consider a revision of categories to solo, customers to the home, and customers and employees to the home as three levels of impact.

Additionally, some businesses practices are significantly impacting residential neighbors and the environment. Further investigation is needed to determine if this is a code compliance issue or other ways to address the impacts and what the County's role should be.

Rural Zones

Additional work is needed to evaluate the rural zones in Kitsap County – Rural Wooded, Rural Protection, and Rural Residential to determine if they are still serving their purpose. Should all uses exist together – e.g. use the word “and” versus “or”?

Legislative Action Process

Review KCC 21.08 and make improvements to clarity and process for reclassification request processes.

Legislative Updates

Bill No.	Title	Short Description	Implement/Notes
SB 5545	Military childcare	Exempts in-home childcare providers from DCYF licensing, if they are located near military bases and certified by a federal military service.	Rural Business
SB 5655	Modifying occupancy loads in childcare settings	When a child care center is operated in a dedicated space within an existing building that has more than one use, the building official must calculate the occupancy load of the child care center based only on the areas in the building where the child care services are provided.	Rural Business
SB 5317	EFSEC services by local governments	Clarifies that an action taken by a city or county is not subject to appeal on the basis that the action is inconsistent with a code preempted by EFSEC, when the action is taken under an agreement with EFSEC to provide technical assistance or advice, or review an application or plan, related to the construction or operation of an EFSEC-certified energy facility.	Energy Siting

HB 1018	Fusion energy facilities	Allows fusion energy facilities to use the Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC) certification process. Specifies that fission nuclear power facilities must use the EFSEC certification process.	Energy Siting
SHB 1261	Open space incidental use	Provides tax relief for certain agritourism uses on open space land. When farmers conduct agritourism activities on their open space land, the land is removed from the classification by the county assessors, and this is causing Washington farmers hardship.	Open Space
HB 1304	Boundary review filings	Specifies that a boundary review board has 45 days from the effective filing date of a notice of intention regarding a local government's proposed action to determine whether the proposed action will be reviewed. The goal of the bill is to ensure that requests submitted to boundary review boards are dealt with equally, and to avoid delays.	Boundary Line Adjustments
HB 1615	Water system classification	Prohibits using a default number of people served per connection if it would cause a water system to be classified as a Group A system when it would otherwise be considered a Group B system. Effective date 4/16/2025.	Water Wells
ESB 5471	Middle housing	Allows counties to authorize middle housing types in single family zones located within UGAs and LAMIRDS, up to four residential units per lot. Specifies development regulations and permit review processes for this type of middle housing. Local action adopting this policy cannot be subject to appeal.	Rural Affordable Housing; LAMIRDS
ESSB 5184	Parking Reform and Modernization Act	Prohibits cities and counties from requiring more than 0.5 parking space per multifamily unit or more than one parking space per single-family home. It also prohibits cities and counties from requiring businesses to have more than two parking spaces per 1,000 square feet of commercial space. Exempts certain buildings from minimum parking requirements altogether, such as those undergoing a change of use, senior housing, affordable housing, and childcare facilities. Allows counties to petition the Department of Commerce for exemptions or variances from the law, on a case-by-case basis. Counties may require off-street parking if the county's roads are not developed to the standards for streets and roads adopted by the	Implementation required! Rural Business

		cities within that county. Must implement within 18 months of effective date (July 27, 2025).	
HB 1515	Alcohol in public spaces	Through December 31, 2027, local governments may request, and the Liquor and Cannabis Board may approve, expanded outdoor alcohol service for liquor licensees. Certain public engagement and reporting requirements are due by September 2026.	Rural Business, Rural Events World Cup Fan Zone
EHB 1602	Food service options for liquor licenses	Authorizes breweries to satisfy their liquor license food service requirements by subcontracting to a food truck or food vendor.	Rural Business
SB 5319	Surface mine reclamation	Several surface mine reclamation permit fees are increased, with some provisions for public works projects.	Mineral Resources