

# KITSAP COUNTY RURAL AND RESOURCE LANDS COMMUNITY SURVEY

Executive Summary on Key Policy Findings | April 11, 2025

## **Overview**

From February 1 through March 7, 2025, 1,026 members of the public participated in an online survey about rural and resource land issues. The data reveals public concern about the impacts of growth, development, and infrastructure in the county's rural communities. The findings clearly support policies to protect rural character, guide growth away from rural areas, and improve infrastructure and services that support rural residents. Although the survey results were analyzed by County district (North, Central and South), there was little variation across districts on the ranked-choice questions.

## **Action Items for Upcoming Rural and Resource Planning**

Based on the survey responses, the public supports addressing the following issues in the County's comprehensive plan:

- Prioritize rural preservation in land use policy and zoning.
- Limit housing growth in rural zones and direct new development to urban areas.
- Invest in rural infrastructure, especially pedestrian, bike, and road safety improvements.
- Support rural agriculture, small business, and economic initiatives compatible with rural character.
- Enhance rural engagement in county planning processes.

## **Survey Details:**

### **Preserving Rural Character is a Top Priority**

- 87% of respondents believe maintaining Kitsap County's rural look and feel is important.
- 82% support policies to protect rural open spaces, agricultural land, and scenic areas.
- There is strong consensus that preserving the county's rural identity should guide planning decisions.

### **Restricting Growth in Rural Areas**

- Only 27% of respondents support allowing more housing in rural zones.
- 71% prefer concentrating growth in existing towns and urban growth areas.

Residents support growth where infrastructure already exists, not in rural landscapes where it could erode community character.

### **Improving Rural Transportation and Safety**

- 63% want improved walking and biking conditions in rural areas.
- 71% are concerned about traffic conditions and safety on rural roads.

There is strong support for safer, more connected transportation options in rural parts of the county, particularly near service centers and along key corridors.

### **Support for Rural-Compatible Economic Development**

- 77% support expanding local agriculture and rural food systems.
- 72% support small, locally-owned rural businesses.
- Only 22% support large-scale commercial development in rural areas.

Residents want economic strategies that strengthen rural communities without introducing incompatible land uses.

### **Rural Environmental Stewardship**

- 83% support stronger protection for wetlands, forests, and wildlife habitat often located in rural areas.
- 78% support rural climate resilience strategies and energy efficiency improvements.
- Environmental preservation in rural parts of Kitsap County is seen as critical to the county's future.

### **Governance and Communication with Rural Communities**

- 63% want more opportunities to shape local planning decisions.
- Only 39% feel well-informed about county planning efforts.

Improving outreach, transparency, and access to planning information is especially important in rural areas, where residents can feel underserved.

### **Potential Next Steps:**

- Define rural character in policies and code and ensure that zoning prevents incompatible development from locating near existing agriculture and timber activities.
- Reinforce direction of growth and infrastructure to Urban Growth Areas.
- Review comp plan policies and focused plans (such as the Transportation Improvement Program) for potential ways to address concerns about road safety, traffic and limited public transit.
- Develop policies that promote home-based enterprises, agritourism, and small/sustainable farms in rural areas.
- Review existing comp plan protections for forests, wetlands and water quality, and ensure that these are reflected in the Rural and Resource Lands chapter.
- Tailor outreach strategies to reach rural residents and ensure transparency in the planning process.
- Investigate further in June workshops on the following topics: energy siting, forestry protection/timber production, affordable housing/rural residential development, and traffic/fast driving/safety/more roads.