Study Sharing Summary

What is the Boundary Planning Study Area?

The Study Area extends eastward from the Southwest Urban Growth Area (SWUGA) to Broadway Ave, north to Cathcart and south to the county line. It includes the Maltby Urban Growth Area (UGA) for context. This area has been chosen for study given it is adjacent to a fast-growing area.

What is the Boundary Planning Study?

The Boundary Planning Study (BPS) is a high-level study of existing conditions and opportunities and constraints in the study area and surroundings to inform future planning choices.

As a high-level study, the BPS describes, generally, current social, environmental, land suitability, and capital facility conditions in the BPS Area.

The BPS also evaluates a range of hypothetical growth scenarios, and includes a scenario with no change to existing land use designations. The purpose of evaluating hypothetical scenarios is to:

- Consider costs of providing infrastructure and services outside of the existing UGA, and
- Understand potential environmental and social implications.

The study also assesses regulations and policies that must be satisfied or amended if UGA boundary adjustments were to be considered in future planning initiatives.
Limitations

The BPS is not a plan containing detailed proposals for land use or growth. As a study, the BPS is meant to sketch conditions, scenarios, and implications in the BPS Area and immediate surroundings. The BPS relies on existing studies and available models (e.g., transportation). Where new evaluation is provided (e.g., a vulnerability and suitability model), the BPS uses existing spatial data and broad methods that produce approximate results. In some cases, existing spatial data was evaluated and assessments developed with professional judgment and expertise to form planning level assessments for the study, such as with watershed characterization or groundwater recharge.

Since the BPS is a high-level study producing rough or approximate analysis, any future detailed analysis conducted to meet other state planning requirements may produce different numbers or information or test more fully developed alternatives.

The BPS study does not present tradeoffs about growth in other parts of the county. If the growth were not proposed in the BPS, and instead was going to other parts of the county, environmental and social implications and capital costs would be incurred in other parts of the county.

Governing Frameworks

A multitude of interconnected state, regional, and local laws and authorities determine how growth will occur in Washington State. While it is the County that adopts UGA boundaries, it is not County policy alone that guides where growth can occur, and when UGAs can be amended. Development patterns need to be consistent with policies at a countywide and regional level. If UGA amendments were desired, and they were not consistent with regulations and policies, processes are in place for seeking changes to those regulations and policies. Legislative amendments would be a lengthy process with the potential for success uncertain.

A number of initiatives are under review—including VISION 2050 and an update to the County’s Buildable Lands Report—that could alter how the County plans for urban areas and rural areas including LAMIRDS like Clearview. VISION 2050 is the Puget Sound Regional Council’s process to develop a strategy to accommodate an additional 1.8 million people in the central Puget Sound area. The Buildable Lands Report is currently being updated to address recent changes to state law and to support the County’s 2023 Comprehensive Plan Update.

Outreach

Outreach efforts were designed to share information about the BPS and to provide opportunities to gather insights from stakeholders about BPS Area conditions. The outreach process involved reaching out to stakeholders, including community and government/service provider stakeholders.

Methods of outreach included a project website, a survey taken by over 1,100 persons, stakeholder interviews and discussions with tribes, government agencies and officials, service providers, and community organizations, and workshops. The County shared the draft BPS online and at a workshop, and collected feedback in a short online survey: about 250 individuals participated between the workshop and survey.

While opinions varied, consistent themes included:
- Fix Transportation System.
- Protect and Conserve the Natural Environment.
- Maintain Rural Character.
- Address Housing Affordability and Availability.
- Ensure Quality Services and Make Infrastructure Investments.
- Provide More Opportunities for Community Engagement.

Some themes are in tension, such as maintaining rural character and providing more housing at densities that allow for affordability and serviceability (e.g., transit and other services).

Many respondents wanted to see greater growth in existing urban areas elsewhere leaving the BPS Area rural. Others thought some expansions of business areas, while retaining rural residential beyond the business areas, would be beneficial for the community. Others felt the area could be urban and developed for more housing.

LAMIRD

Clearview is the only designated Limited Area of More Intensive Rural Development (LAMIRD), a GMA-based designation, within the County. Changes to boundaries in LAMIRDS are only possible under limited situations. A current initiative called “A Road Map to Washington’s Future” has reviewed possible adjustments to the planning framework in Washington State, including potential flexibility in the framework for LAMIRDS.
**Highlights of Current Conditions**

The BPS has coalesced existing information and applied models and evaluations that advance the understanding of the BPS Area at a broad scale.

- **Character:** The BPS Area is a place of contrasts. It offers natural beauty as well as busy, pass-through roads. Despite lots developed to urban and semi-urban densities during pre-GMA periods, the BPS Area contains about 50% forest cover.

- **Social:** The area offers rural homes and hobby farms in dispersed patterns, and it offers crossroads with commercial services. With growth pressures in the region, housing prices have risen locally, and the median household income of BPS Area households is higher than the median for the rest of the county and neighboring cities. Opportunities for affordable homes are limited due to rural densities; however, manufactured homes are a relatively affordable option. As of 2017, growth has exceeded 2035 targets in the unincorporated Municipal UGAs along the border of the BPS Area. The unincorporated SWUGA has achieved over 80% of its target. However, there is still capacity to grow in unincorporated UGAs and cities in the county as a whole.

- **Environment:** Much of the BPS Area provides high value salmonid and fish-bearing streams and wetlands. Watershed functions are largely intact in the central and central-east portion of the BPS Area. Other portions of the BPS Area are partially intact. There are opportunities for protection and targeted restoration throughout. Groundwater recharge supports stream baseflows and provides potable water in a sole-source aquifer. Open space and tree canopy provide regional air quality and habitat benefits as well as local benefits.

- **Transportation:** Major state routes – SR 9 running north-south, SR 524 running east-west, and SR-522 along the southeastern edge through the Maltby UGA – are the primary travel routes. Befitting the rural designation of the area, the County has a limited road network. During peak hours, traffic congestion is experienced on State and County roads. There is no transit service in the BPS Area as the community voted in 1997 and 2008 not to be included in Community Transit’s service area.

- **Parks:** Snohomish County is the primary provider of parks and recreation services and manages passive (Hole in the Sky) and active (Miners Corner) parkland. The future Carousel Ranch Community Park is undeveloped with a master plan to guide future use. The County has secured a rail-and-trail right of way for future extension of the Centennial Trail. A special district provides an active park in Maltby. There are opportunities for parks and trails on public lands and along pipeline corridors.

- **Stormwater:** Most of the study area is rural, and there are limited constructed stormwater features. Impervious area is relatively low and forested/permeable conditions are high. Most of the County’s surface water management revenue collected for services in this area is related to non-residential use (e.g., Maltby).

- **Water:** A majority of the BPS Area is served by Alderwood, Cross Valley, and Silver Lake Water and Sewer Districts; Cross Valley is the primary district. Unserved areas are feasible to serve. Some areas require new or updated water system infrastructure consistent with District plans.

- **Sewer:** Sewer service within UGAs abutting or within the BPS Area is the responsibility of the same districts noted above. Cross Valley provides sewer service to the Maltby UGA. Most of the rural portion of the study area is feasible for sewer service, subject to development costs associated with topography and distance to the nearest treatment plant.

- **Other:** The BPS also addresses Fire Protection, Schools, Power, Gas, and Telecommunications.
Scenarios

Scenarios were designed to help the County understand the challenges and opportunities of no change and making hypothetical changes—as it relates to land use, growth, conservation, infrastructure and service provision and costs, policy framework, and related topics. The scenarios were mapped with 2-acre grid cells instead of street blocks or parcels. Attributes were mapped and evaluated by grid cell.

Zoning districts in place today, and growth adopted in the Snohomish County’s Comprehensive Plan for the area through the year 2035, are the basis for the Current Strategies Scenario. Other scenarios are built with housing typologies (see above) and mixed use commercial typologies that can fit in either a rural or urban context depending on density and open space. The Nodes Scenario retains more rural lands, and applies urban housing and mixed use centers in two nodes, one northeast and one southwest. The Urban Scenario applies a wider range of urban densities including clustered homes with open space, a transitional density in the center, and denser neighborhoods elsewhere; it includes rural densities along Little Bear Creek. With limited exceptions, the Nodes and Urban scenarios do not relate growth to a specified time-period.
Evaluation

Suitability

A Land Suitability Analysis Tool framework was developed to identify a series of landscape vulnerabilities and suitabilities:

- Landscape vulnerability involves characteristics that would be impacted by new development, which could be through the presence of new development (e.g., land cover) or the ongoing effects of a development (e.g., proximity to wetlands).
- Development suitability considers the appropriateness of a certain use in a location. This may include factors such as the ability to service the site with water and wastewater services cost-effectively, or accessibility of the site to transportation systems.

The tool combines spatial input layers into index scores according to a series of weights that present how development on a site would either affect or be affected by the landscape. The tool is flexible. Application of different characteristics and/or different weighting could produce different results.

Index maps show areas suitable for residential and commercial uses based on the characteristics and weightings applied during the study. The more highly suited areas appear “red” and less suited appear “blue”. Neutral areas are “yellow”. Gray is “excluded” due to critical areas that are undevelopable, or public lands already committed to uses (e.g., schools). The Maltby UGA was excluded from the land suitability analysis as the study assumed continuation of existing land uses in this UGA.

Growth

Under the Current Strategies Scenario, minimal housing is anticipated due to the area’s largely rural status. The Nodes and Urban scenarios were designed by applying urban typologies in the area to create a range of denser development patterns. Once vulnerable acres (e.g., streams and buffers) were taken into account, as well as other factors such as capital facilities, open space, and unavailable land/inefficient patterns, the
resulting growth yields could be calculated. The Urban and Nodes scenarios developed for the purposes of this study would produce a large number of housing units and modest increases in jobs.

Growth by Scenario

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Housing Units (Total)</th>
<th>Population (Total)</th>
<th>Employment (Total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>4,102*</td>
<td>10,976</td>
<td>4,478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Strategies (2035)</td>
<td>4,224</td>
<td>11,310</td>
<td>9,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Node</td>
<td>19,687</td>
<td>45,261</td>
<td>12,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban**</td>
<td>27,386-27,801</td>
<td>62,961-63,914</td>
<td>12,409</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: *The Transportation microanalysis zone (MAZ) model identifies 4,096 as the figure based on Census information. The figure 4,102 is based on 2018 Assessor data and is rounded from grid-cell information.
**Due to the Large Lot Open Space in the central north area between the creek network, a range of densities is tested. The low range is about 415 dwelling units less and assumes 2.5 units per net acre, whereas the upper number is at 4 units per net acre.
Sources: Snohomish County PDS (2010); BERK, 2019.

Environment

Increased impervious area and decreased forest canopy can degrade watershed conditions, reduce groundwater recharge (see map at right), and reduce groundwater discharge to streams. Each of the scenarios would have a certain level of new development, and this would increase impervious area. Public investments (e.g., park and ride, schools, etc.) would also increase impervious area. There could be a loss of tree canopy as well. The map in the sidebar illustrates change in recharge under the Urban scenario.

Impervious Area by Scenario

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Impervious Acres</th>
<th>% Increase over Current Condition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Conditions</td>
<td>1,963*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Strategies</td>
<td>2,281</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nodes</td>
<td>3,194</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>3,914</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: *Total acres in the study area equal about 10,291. Permeable acres equal about 8,328. A subset of the permeable acres consists of forest cover, which equals about 5,209.
Sources: 2015 NOAA land cover (CCAP); Snohomish County SWM (Current Strategies), 2019; BERK (Nodes and Urban), 2019.

In the Nodes Scenario, the Node area to the Northeast in Clearview represents about 70% of the residential growth and the Southwest Node represents about 30% of the residential growth.

Tree Protection and Stormwater Practices to protect Surface and Groundwater Processes

Application of tree protection regulations and stormwater best management practices (BMPs) can help reduce surface water and groundwater effects. Stormwater BMPs cannot fully replicate the watershed processes and functions of a forested landscape.
Major Capital Costs in the County for Roads and Parks

To meet adopted level of service standards under the hypothetical increased growth scenarios, Snohomish County would incur greater transportation and parks capital facilities costs to serve the BPS Area than in its current Comprehensive Plan, particularly under the Nodes and Urban scenarios. Some of the transportation costs are on State and County facilities.

### Transportation and Parks Costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Current Strategies</th>
<th>Nodes</th>
<th>Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transportation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arterial Lane-Miles Needed (County and State Roads)</td>
<td>55-87</td>
<td>102-181</td>
<td>162-201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated Cost (2018 dollars)²</td>
<td>$600 M - $1.3 B</td>
<td>$1.1 - $2.6 B</td>
<td>$1.7 - $2.9 B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parks</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities Demand/Cost</td>
<td>$0 M²</td>
<td>$16.64 M</td>
<td>$25.35 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acres Demand/Cost</td>
<td>$0 M²</td>
<td>$26.79 M</td>
<td>$42.83 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost (February 2019 dollars)²</td>
<td>$0 M²</td>
<td>$43.43 M</td>
<td>$68.18 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>$600 M – $1.3 B</td>
<td>$1.14 – $2.64 B</td>
<td>$1.77 – $2.97 B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
1. Costs are both County and State costs.
2. Snohomish County staff estimate construction and right-of-way cost per lane-mile of roadway in the BPS Area would range from $11M to $14M (in 2018 dollars), including pedestrian facilities and bikeways alongside the arterial.
3. For parks, the NE Node is about 70% of the population and housing, and generally the resulting cost, and the SW Node is about 30% of the demand and cost.
4. Assumes the Large Lot Single Family typology is at 2.5 dwelling units per net acre. If at 4 dwelling units per net acre, there would be another 415 dwellings and about a 2% greater demand and associated cost.
5. As of 2018, requirements for park facilities to meet growth targets in the area were already achieved. The area has already been planned for parks assuming low growth. The County has planned for a countywide unincorporated demand and its Parks Element identifies the location for park improvements including some in the BPS Area.

Source: BERK, 2019.

### Special District Costs

**Fire Districts:** Fire District 7 would be most affected by growth since it covers nearly the full BPS Area territory. If considering the current relationship of households per fire station, it appears 2-5 stations could be needed under the Nodes scenario and 3-7 stations could be needed under the Urban scenario. Future district revenues from new taxpayers could address these costs together with mitigation fees.

**Schools:** Under the Urban scenario, all school districts could see added students, with those most affected being Monroe and Snohomish. Under the Nodes scenario the most affected districts are Northshore and Snohomish. New development would need to pay impact fees.

**Sewer:** The Urban scenario would require more lineal feet of sewer mains and more pump stations than the Nodes scenario. The cost range is $96-320M for Nodes and $132-440M for Urban. New development would bear the cost of service extension. The southwest node results in about 25% of the cost.

### Nodes – Independent Costs

The Northeast Node is a driver for most of the lane miles under the Nodes scenario and would need 47 – 70 added road miles above Current Strategies, at a cost of $500M - $900M. The Southwest Node would need 7-10 miles of roads above Current Strategies with a cost of $100M.

For parks, the Southwest Node contributes about 30% of the added population and resulting cost of $13.3M; the remaining demand would be in the Northeast Node and result in 70% of the demand and cost at about $30.2M.
Evaluation of Fiscal Impacts to County

The BPS provides a fiscal analysis that projects Snohomish County operating and capital expenditures on a per capita basis to apply the County’s historic growth trends to the populations projected per scenario. The fiscal analysis, including the analysis of transportation costs, assumes that growth under Urban and Nodes would occur by 2035 to be able to prepare the projection of revenues and expenditures. Comparing scenario revenues and expenditures to Current Strategies, the Nodes Scenario shows a net fiscal impact of -$829 million, and the Urban Scenario shows a net fiscal impact of -$1.2 billion. The results are heavily influenced by the added Transportation and Parks capital costs above. However it is important to note that the evaluation does include costs associated with lane miles on both State and County roads which would impact the net fiscal impact to the County.

The fiscal evaluation considers the scenarios on top of growth already included in the adopted Comprehensive Plan; it does not consider the implications of additional growth occurring in other parts of the county, instead of in the BPS Area.

Additionally, it should be noted that the analysis covers a period of 2019-2035 in order to project future fiscal conditions. The County regularly uses debt financing and other financing techniques to implement large capital costs that are not covered in any one period by that period’s regular revenues. Both the Nodes and Urban scenarios pose high capital costs because they would alter planned land use of the BPS Area.

Tools and Opportunities

The BPS identifies a range of policy tools that could address the stark transitions felt by residents where rural land uses abut urban land uses, as well as policy tools for environmental protection, conservation and recreation. Whether the BPS Area is urban or rural, there are opportunities to address scale, landscaping, separation of uses, and zoning to ameliorate conflicts in use intensity such as along the Maltby UGA. Other conservation tools could result in a more permanent defined UGA boundary.

The BPS also considers topics relevant across many parts of the county such as affordable housing, economic development, and transit. Policy objectives that could be advanced in the BPS Area regard:

- Housing choice and affordability, where requirements for affordable housing or needed ownership housing types could be required by urban zoning if urban designations were considered for application in the BPS Area under future planning initiatives.
- Economic development of rural businesses inside or outside of LAMIRDs, though these options are more likely to be limited and “small scale” given the GMA direction for development in rural areas.
- The BPS Area is not included in the Community Transit district which would require annexation by cities or a vote to extend boundaries. Regional express service is possible whether rural or urban. Local transit service would depend on density of development, with the ability to serve areas if densities are similar to Silver Firs to the north.

Future Use of the Study

This study provides data and information that may inform future County planning efforts, such as the 2023 Snohomish County Comprehensive Plan Update, when alternatives for accommodating future growth will be developed. The findings of the BPS will provide information that may be considered at the time that Snohomish County is developing options across the county for accommodating future growth. The study itself is not proposing actions to change land uses or UGA boundaries.

Acknowledgments

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