

DATE: January 6, 2020
TO: Snohomish County Tomorrow Planning Advisory Committee Subcommittee
CC: Steve Toy, Snohomish County Buildable Lands Team
FROM: Morgan Shook and Margaret Raimann, ECONorthwest
SUBJECT: SCT PAC SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING 2 SUMMARY

To address changes to the Review and Evaluation Program for Buildable Lands as described in E2SSB-5254, ECONorthwest is working with Snohomish County to assist in identifying and addressing recommended updates to the County's Buildable Lands Methodology. The County contracted with ECONorthwest to develop and recommend updates to the methodology in collaboration with the Snohomish County Buildable Lands Team, a subcommittee of the Snohomish County Tomorrow (SCT) Planning Advisory Committee (PAC), and other key stakeholders. Following this process, the Snohomish County Buildable Lands Team will implement these updates to the methodology in the 2021 Buildable Lands Report (BLR).

The SCT PAC subcommittee held its second meeting on November 12, 2019 at 1:00 p.m. ECONorthwest and Snohomish County Buildable Lands Program staff led the meeting, which provided a presentation of initial findings of the County's validation study, as well as ECONorthwest's analysis of BLR land classifications compared to recent development since the 2012 BLR. ECONorthwest also guided a discussion of the potential updates to the methodology based on the analyses and updated Guidelines. The third meeting of the subcommittee is scheduled on December 10, 2019. [Later rescheduled to January 7, 2020.]

This memorandum provides a summary of the November 12th meeting, focusing on key meeting outcomes and next steps.

Key Issues and Desired Outcomes

Validation study. Steve Toy provided the draft results of the County's validation study, which compared a sample of recent (2013-2018) development projects to the capacity estimates in the 2012 Buildable Land Report. The Buildable Lands Team found that overall for most of the projects studied, the actual yield of housing units was higher than the predicted capacity.

Redevelopable land analysis. ECONorthwest presented initial findings of the redevelopable land analysis. Key findings of this analysis were:

- Validation of housing densities showed higher achieved densities than planned densities.
- Validation work showed that the largest ratios of achieved vs planned densities occurred on vacant parcels.

Subcommittee members discussed these findings:

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- One member remarked that a possible reason for the higher achieved densities could be because of actions on the part of jurisdictions to change underlying zoning in some areas over the review period.

Land Classifications and Market factor considerations. ECONorthwest presented initial findings of considerations for market factor. Key findings of this analysis were:

- Variations of development by land classification and land development type.
- Land classifications could have some improvement to methodology for prediction of development.
- Strong correlations of development with specific parcel attribute characteristics; specifically, FAR and Improvement to Land Value Ratios.
- More units built on properties than were estimated in 2012.

Subcommittee members discussed these findings:

- There was some discussion about revisions to land classification methods to be understand/predict development.
- There was some discussion on how to interpret finding-to-date for guidance on addressing changes to market factors.

Infrastructure gap analysis. ECONorthwest presented initial findings of the infrastructure gap analysis. Key findings of this analysis were:

- The updated legislation includes updated requirements related to review of areas with infrastructure gaps. The Guidelines describe an approach for counties to identify areas within UGAs with infrastructure gaps in the updated Buildable Lands Report.
- Based on the documentation provided, these areas may be subject to reductions in capacity or specific reasonable measures.
- ECONorthwest used a case study approach to address this analysis. Snohomish County staff initially provided two study areas—one in the Arlington UGA and one in the Granite Falls UGA—to evaluate the barriers to infrastructure development

Reasonable measures. ECONorthwest presented their review of the county's reasonable measures. Key findings of this analysis were:

- The updated legislation includes updated requirements related to adoption of reasonable measures when necessary.
- The Guidelines describe the general approach that jurisdictions should take when the BLR results show a potential need for reasonable measures.
- The County is required to define how jurisdictions provide rationale, and the Guidelines provide some potential options.

Next Steps

The next meeting of the SCT PAC subcommittee is scheduled for December 10, 2019. [Later rescheduled to January 7, 2020.] ECONorthwest will present refined results and recommendations.