

Preliminary Development Plan Requirements

Exhibit #15.

Chapter 8 Rural Lands



Chapter 8. Rural and Resource Lands

8.1. Introduction and Overview

The Rural and Resource Lands chapter of the Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan addresses unincorporated portion of the County outside Urban Growth Areas (UGA). The Land Use Element in Chapter 2 and the Rural and Resource Lands chapter together form the basis for future land use patterns within the County. They also form a basis for decision makers to make land use decisions in the unincorporated areas in Kittitas County. The policies in the Rural and Resource Lands chapter work with the County's Comprehensive Plan land use designation map in Chapter 2.

This Chapter is in two sections. The first section discusses land use designations for the County's rural lands and is the County's Rural Element. It outlines the goals, policies and objectives related to protecting rural character with a variety of densities as required by the Washington State Growth Management Act. (RCW 36.70A.070(5)) Rural lands are outside UGAs and commercial agricultural, commercial forest, and mineral lands.

The second section provides for goals, policies and objectives for the County's resource lands. Resource lands are considered the commercial agriculture lands, the commercial forested lands and mineral lands.

8.1.1. Growth Management Act Goals

The first section of this Chapter relates to rural lands and rural development. The State of Washington Growth Management Act requires that the County "include measures that apply to rural development and protect the rural character of the area as established by the County." These measures must be used to control rural development, assure visual compatibility of rural development with surrounding areas, reduce sprawl and protect against conflict with the use of agricultural, forest and mineral resource lands (RCW 36.70A.070).

“Rural Character” is defined in the Act as lands where:

- open space and visual and natural landscape predominate over the built environment,
- opportunities exist for traditional rural lifestyle and rural based economies,
- spaces and development are compatible with wildlife habitat,
- undeveloped land is not converted to development of sprawl and low density,
- activities generally do not require extension of urban governmental services, and
- land use is consistent with protection of surface and ground water flows and recharge/discharge areas. (RCW 36.70A.030(15))

“Rural development” refers to development outside the urban growth area and outside agricultural, forest, and mineral resource lands designated pursuant to RCW 36.70A.170. Rural development can consist of a variety of uses and residential densities, including clustered residential development, at levels that are consistent with the preservation of rural character and the requirements of the rural element.” (RCW 36.70A.030(16))

“Rural governmental services” include those public services and public facilities historically and typically delivered at an intensity usually found in rural areas, and may include domestic water systems, fire and police protection services, transportation and public transit services, and other public utilities associated with rural development and normally not associated with urban areas. (RCW 36.70A.030(17))

The Resource section of this Chapter refers to the commercial agriculture, forest, and mineral resources of long-term significance that are not characterized by urban growth. (RCW 36.70A.170)

8.1.2. Rural and Resource Policies

Kittitas County planning policies help define rural and resource lands, appropriate land uses and service levels, and unique rural features. They also identify innovative land use techniques which may be used to protect these features.

Rural policies are intended to enhance and protect the County’s rural character, and to encourage appropriate rural land use patterns and service levels. Rural Lands planning policies include:

GPO 8.1 Rural lands are characterized by a lower level of services; mixed residential, agricultural and open space uses; broad visual landscapes and parcels of varying sizes, a variety of housing types and small unincorporated communities.

GPO 8.2 Rural lands often have an established land use pattern that inhibits urban character and are generally, and anticipated to continue to be, served by septic systems and individual wells or small community water systems.

GPO 8.3 The County shall promote the retention of its overall character by establishing zoning classifications that preserve rural character identified to Kittitas County.

GPO 8.4 Development in rural areas is subject to agricultural and forestry activities that may take place as a right on adjacent properties.

GPO 8.5 In order to protect and preserve Resource Lands, non-resource development and activities on adjacent Rural lands shall require preservation of adjacent vegetation, existing landforms (e.g. ravines) or use of other methods that provide functional separation from the resource land use.

GPO 8.6 Reserved.

GPO 8.7 The use of cluster platting and conservation platting shall be limited to specific rural areas to lessen the impacts upon the environment and traditional agricultural/forestry uses and to provide services most economically. The use of other innovative land use techniques that protect rural character and resource land uses will be evaluated for future implementation.

GPO 8.8 A certain level of mixed uses in rural areas and rural service centers is acceptable and may include limited commercial, service, and rural industrial uses.

Resource Lands are areas which provide commercial agriculture, forestry, and mineral resources. Kittitas County planning policies addressing Resource Lands include:

GPO 8.9 Protecting and preserving resource lands shall be given priority. Proposed development allowed and adjacent to resource lands shall be conditioned to protect resource lands from negative impacts from that development.

GPO 8.10 Allow for lands which offer adequate supply of rock and gravel resources located in areas compatible for such uses and conditioned so that operation does not negatively impact rural character.

GPO 8.11 Policies will reflect a “right to farm” in agricultural lands.

8.2. Rural Lands

8.2.1. Introduction

Kittitas County’s rural land use designation consists of a balance of differing natural features, landscape types, and land uses. Rural land uses consist of dispersed and clustered residential developments, farms, ranches, wooded lots, and agricultural and recreational/commercial and industrial uses that serve local and national and international populations as customers. Rural landscapes encompass the full range of natural features including wide open agriculture and range land, forested expanses, rolling meadows, ridge lines and valley walls, distant vistas, streams and rivers, shorelines and other sensitive areas.

The Rural Lands exhibit a vibrant and viable landscape where a diversity of land uses and housing densities are compatible with rural character. “Rural character,” as identified through scientific research over the past two decades, indicates that residents of rural communities,

homebuilders, and planners see it in various ways depending upon the community and the rural area. This research demonstrates that “rural character” is not identical in all areas and must be determined by communities. Overall, the research shows that “rural character” is best determined by concepts existing within the community such as existing densities and building materials (Tilt, et. al., 2006), “nature-related areas” particularly having forest, not just trees, and open spaces related to the community (Kaplan, Austin, 2004, 2003, and 2001), and “natural amenities and perception of recreational and (individual community) residential development” (Mascouriller, 2002). Study shows that cluster development, when used not to increase density creating suburban or urban-like environments, are most marketable, and preserve “open spaces” desired by communities and potential residents most effectively of all development techniques at this time (Burney, 2006 and Lacey, 1990).

Kittitas County residents, through an extensive public involvement process in 2012, provided descriptions of “rural” that they wish to preserve. Such descriptions include many of the conclusions presented by scientific research including, “natural open spaces and streams,” “forests,” “recreational opportunities and spaces,” “agriculture lands and activities,” “mountain views,” and “development away from urban areas.” These descriptions provide the essence of “rural character” in Kittitas County which corresponds to the research that has been conducted throughout the Country including the local area, and fulfill the broad definition within RCW 36.70A.030. Accompanying policies within this Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan are designed to protect these qualities of the County.

“Rural character” is defined in Kittitas County as predominant visual landscape of open spaces, mountains, forests, and farms and the activities which preserve such features. It balances environmental, forest, and farm protection with a variety of rural development and recreational opportunities. Many sizes and shapes of properties can be found in the Rural Lands providing a wide variety of land use from its diverse topography, small to large acreage properties, assorted economic activities and opportunities, small rural residential development, and recreational opportunities throughout the County, but most intense in the western portion of the County. The Interstate and State Highway systems which traverse the length and width of the County introduce countless travelers and visitors to the “rural character” of Kittitas County. These highways provide access opportunities and means to create and preserve “agri-tourist” activities, provide extensive outdoor recreation activities identified by State law and by residents of Kittitas County as being “rural.” This rich mix of uses and transportation systems allows the variety of lifestyle choice, which makes up the fabric of rural Kittitas County community life.

Some choose a private, more independent lifestyle, or space for small farm activities. Others choose the more compact arrangement found in clustering, with its accompanying open space and close neighbors designed in ways that enhance and preserve rural character. The most common uses in rural lands are agriculture, recreation and logging, which have been basic industries historically and remain important in terms of employment, income and tax base. Kittitas County will strive to encourage and support these activities in areas they occur and are appropriate. With the exclusion of stated incorporated areas, and UGAs all remaining areas are considered to be Rural Lands.

One of the main attractions of the rural residential lifestyle is the low intensity of development and the corresponding sense of a slower pace of living. Part of what creates that attraction is the rural-level facilities and services. The Plan supports and preserves this rural lifestyle by limiting service levels to those historically provided in the County's rural areas. Residents should expect County services,, such as road maintenance and emergency responses to be limited and to decrease as the distance from a rural activity center or urban area increases.

8.2.2. Planning for Rural and Resource Lands

Present rural land uses in Kittitas County are a broad mixture of diverse development patterns stemming from trends established decades ago. The County has been characterized as having an abundance of rural uses including the strong recreational opportunities throughout the entire area. The existence of mountainous topography, intense forest lands, and large lakes in the Upper Kittitas County area draws large populations to skiing, camping, hunting, and hiking opportunities away from intense urban activities often found within the adjacent King County and Pierce County regions. Vibrant river and stream waters invite sports fishermen from around the State to the area. Hunting is prevalent in all areas of the County, including the middle portion of the region where sage and tall grasses are abundant for game bird and mammal habitat.

The Lower Valley of Kittitas County has extensive irrigation and rich soils which have been valuable in accommodation of agriculture activities so vital to the economy. Large farms have existed over a century and are very characteristic of the County's dominant rural character. Small, unincorporated communities exist throughout the County identifying it as having strong rural character. Such communities provide distinct, yet small scale services which rural residents depend upon for daily and weekly activity. Many of these communities are located within "Limited Area of More Intensive Rural Development" or LAMIRDs as defined with the Washington State Growth Management Act. All of these ranges of rural densities and uses have created a successful landscape contributing to an attractive rural lifestyle.

The Interstate and State Highway systems which traverse the length and width of the County introduce countless travelers and visitors to the "rural character" of Kittitas County. These highways provide access opportunities and means to create and preserve "agri-tourist" activities, provide extensive outdoor recreation activities identified by State law and by residents of Kittitas County as being "rural."

The Rural and Resource Lands chapter of the Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan is intended to preserve the rural character described above through adopted goals, policies and objectives (GPO) which are designed to encourage and protect the types of uses that are characteristic to the rural area of the County. The GPOs in this section are intended to reduce conflicting land uses within the County's rural area while providing a variety of rural densities, protecting agriculture land resources and activities, guarding the County's water resources and insuring appropriate services and facilities for such environments.

A variety of rural densities and uses which are characteristic to a rural environment are encouraged through the adoption and recognition of the objectives and policies within the Plan, and they create and enhance a successful landscape desired by the County. GPOs in the Rural

and Resource Lands chapter Element also provides for a variety of rural uses which are compatible with the County's rural character, and decrease the need for road and utility improvements, police and fire protection, schools in rural areas and other services often found in more urban environments. Without limiting these types of urban services, their existence can often contribute to "rural sprawl," or the scattering of development throughout rural areas which can be inconsistent with an identified rural character. The proper mix of rural uses and densities permits rural growth to be accommodated in a variety of areas where it is compatible with both resource and urban activities.

The GPOs of the Rural and Resource Lands chapter of the Comprehensive Plan provide the prospect for preservation of viable and vibrant landscapes associated with rural character. These objectives and policies provide the opportunity to capitalize on the recreational characteristics while preserving the natural resources in Kittitas County often associated with its open spaces. These objectives also deliver the potential for a variety of community life often associated with rural environments while preserving the rural quality of the County. The plan in its goals and objectives accomplishes preservation of agriculture, mining, forest and recreational activities so vital to the economic base of the County.

8.2.3. Purpose of Rural Lands

- Preserve and maintain the rural character of Kittitas County.
- Sustain and protect the westerly mountainous, recreational open space, and its easterly non-resource agricultural and rangeland activities.
- Provide rural economic opportunity.
- Offer opportunity for a variety of rural density and housing choices while maintaining rural character and protecting health and safety.
- Provide for infrastructure and services necessary to rural development.

The goals, policies and objectives (GPOs) outlined below are intended to reduce conflicting land uses within the entire County's rural area while providing a variety of rural densities, protecting open spaces, and insuring that appropriate services and facilities are provided for rural developed environments.

GPO 8.12 Incentive-based land use strategies will be examined and adopted to encourage land uses which are compatible to the rural environment.

GPO 8.13 Encourage development activities and establish development standards which enhance or result in the preservation of rural lands.

GPO 8.14 Allow for a variety of rural densities which maintain and recognize rural character, agricultural activities, rural community and development patterns, open spaces and recreational opportunities.

GPO 8.14A Only allow comprehensive plan amendments, rezones, bonus densities, and other measures that increase rural densities where adequate supplies of potable water are available that will not adversely affect surface and ground water and agriculture.

GPO 8.14B Set allowed densities based on the available water resources and reserve adequate resources to support the Kittitas County's economic base including agriculture.

GPO 8.14C Development shall be located distances from streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, critical areas determined necessary and as outlined within existing Shorelines Management Program, the Critical Areas Ordinance and other adopted resource ordinances in order to protect ground and surface waters.

GPO 8.15 Uses common in rural areas of Kittitas County enhancing rural character, such as agriculture uses in Lower Kittitas and rural residential uses and recreation uses in Upper Kittitas shall be protected from activities which encumber them.

GPO 8.16 Give preference to land uses in Rural designated areas that are related to agriculture, rural residential development, tourism, outdoor recreation, and other open space activities.

GPO 8.17 Land use development within the Rural area that is not compatible with Kittitas County rural character or agricultural activities as defined in RCW 90.58.065(2)(a) will not be allowed.

GPO 8.18 Limit development in rural areas through density requirements that protect and maintain existing rural character, natural open space, critical areas, and recreation areas. Direct rural development to lands that have adequate public services.

GPO 8.19 Develop buffer standards and regulations that will be used between incompatible rural uses.

GPO 8.20 Cottage and home occupation which are rural in nature are allowed within all rural land use designations and regulations. Impact upon surrounding environments and upon existing public services shall be considered when such industries are proposed.

GPO 8.20A Future "General Commercial" zones will not be allowed outside Urban Growth Areas and LAMIRDs.

GPO 8.21 Kittitas County will provide criteria within its zoning code to determine what uses will be permitted within rural zone classifications in order to preserve rural character.

GPO 8.21A Residential and commercial buildings outside Type 1 LAMIRDs shall be located in areas buffered by vegetation and along the edges of fields or areas of shrub-steppe vegetation to maintain Kittitas County's historic rural character.

GPO 8.21B Functional separation and setbacks found necessary for the protection of water resources, rural character and/or visual compatibility with surrounding rural areas shall be required where development is proposed. The first sentence of this policy shall not apply to agricultural activities as defined in RCW 90.58.065(2(a)). When required by the county shoreline master program or critical area regulations, buffers shall be provided.

GPO 8.22 Provisions shall be made for roadside stands, farmers' markets, "U-pick," and customer share cropping operations.

8.2.4. Rural Designations

Purpose

Rural Lands are divided by function of the uses intended. The purpose of placing certain lands in these land use designations is to accommodate these various functions. Designations of rural lands are intended to categorize lands within the County so that they:

- Permit residential development in rural areas which enhance and protect rural character;
- Preserve and protect non-resource forests and agriculture lands which are dominant in Kittitas County;
- Provide opportunity for development for recreational purposes which are consistent with rural character and protect public health and safety; and
- Provide opportunity for limited development of rural community.

Rural areas provide a choice in living environments through a mix of large lots and existing smaller lots in rural centers and limited areas of more intensive rural development.

Table 8.2-1 below identifies the Rural Land Use designations within the Kittitas County rural areas and corresponding zoning classifications. The Table also displays the estimated acreages of each designation and classification determined by the Geographic Information System (GIS) of the County. The land use designations are limited in number to reflect the functions within the rural areas of the County.

Four land use designations have been identified within the Rural Land Use Plan. Rural Residential lands are those which are adjacent or near identified UGAs or LAMIRDs. They generally have a lower population density than urban areas but higher than most rural areas. A limited level of government services usually exists, and they are often inside Fire Districts and are outside flood areas and most hazard areas.

The second rural designation within the Plan is the Rural Working lands. Uses within this designation generally encourage farming, ranching and storage of agriculture products, and some commercial and industrial uses compatible with rural environment and supporting agriculture and/or forest activities. Areas in this designation often have low population densities with larger

parcel size compared to Rural Residential areas. Agriculture and forestry activities are generally less in scope than in the Resource lands.

Rural Recreation is the third land use designation of the Plan. These lands often include scenic roadways, vistas, ski and hiking areas, and recreational and seasonal recreation residences. They include resort activities and provide limited commercial services to tourists and seasonal residents where rural character is preserved. Rural Recreation lands may be located in flood or other hazard areas where fishing and outdoor activities are prevalent.

The final rural lands designation is Limited Areas of More Intensive Development, or LAMIRDS. These areas are often small, rural communities where rural residents and others can gather, work, shop, entertain, and reside. Commercial and industrial development compatible with rural character may continue to locate and prosper in rural areas under limited conditions.

Zone classifications shown in the Table below outline the zones designed to achieve the goals and policies outlined in the designations. There are relatively few classifications within the Rural Residential and Rural Working lands. Most zoning classifications exist within the LAMIRDS since they allow a broader and more intense mix of uses.

Table 8.2.4-1 Rural Land Use Designations, Corresponding Zoning Classifications and Acreages

Type of Land Use	Rural Land Use Designation	Acres ¹	Rural Zoning Classification	Acres ¹
Rural	Rural Residential	30,013	Agriculture 5	11,933
			Rural 5	18,228
			Planned Unit Development	0
Rural Working	329,982	Agriculture 20	113,252	
		Forest and Range	220,237	
Rural Recreation	10,535	Master Planned Resort	6,446	
		General Commercial	17	
		Rural Recreation	3,939	
		Planned Unit Development	107	
LAMIRDS	1,168	Residential	384	
		Residential 2	42	
		Agriculture 3	35	
		Agriculture 20	23	
		Rural 3	19	
		Rural 5	141	
		Limited Commercial	13	
		General Commercial	194	
		Highway Commercial	19	
		Light Industrial	36	
		General Industrial	5	
		Forest and Range	78	
		Planned Unit Development	140	

¹ Acreages are approximate.

8.2.4.1. Rural Residential

Purpose

- Allow for residential opportunity with rural character and a variety of densities outside UGAs without population expecting all urban services
- Generally, provide services supporting rural development and lower population densities
- Designate areas where lots are generally less than 10 acres in size and have a common land use pattern
- Permit siting in areas generally without commercial activity
- Protect residential activities from flooding areas and natural hazard areas
- Preserve views of open space while providing opportunity for variety of rural densities

Rural Residential lands are characterized by activities generally associated with small-scale farms, dispersed single-family homes, and some types of recreational uses and open spaces.

Lands are typically too far from the urban area to enable cost-effective provision of public services, and the typical uses do not require urban services.

Rural Residential lands are implemented through the Rural 5 and the Agriculture 5 zones. Existing legally established parcels in this designation that do not meet minimum 5-acre lot sizes are recognized as legal nonconforming lots.

The following are goals, policies and objectives (GPOs) for activities on Rural Residential lands:

GPO 8.23 Municipal, or public urban services should not be extended outside of urban growth areas in Rural Lands. However, municipal services may be provided to a Master Planned Resort which is approved pursuant to County Comprehensive Plan policies and development regulations so long as all costs directly attributable to the extension of such services to the resort or community, including capacity increases, are fully borne by the resort or community.

GPO 8.23A Residential development near water shall limit impervious surfaces to the size necessary to conduct the allowed use proposed on the site.

GPO 8.23B New rural residential development shall provide adequate water for domestic use.

GPO 8.24 Capital Facilities and Utilities may be sited, constructed, and operated by outside public service providers (or sited, constructed, and/or operated jointly with a Master Planned Resort (MPR), limited area of more intensive rural development (LAMIRD)) on property located outside of an urban growth area if such facilities and utilities are located within the boundaries of such resort or community which is approved pursuant to County Comprehensive Plan policies and development regulations.

GPO 8.25 Electric and natural gas transmission and distribution facilities may be sited in any areas of Kittitas County including "Rural" designated areas, municipalities, UGAs, Master Planned Resorts, and LAMIRDS.

GPO 8.26 Public services and public facilities established under RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d) are limited to just those necessary to serve the developed area boundaries and are not allowed to expand into adjacent Rural Lands.

GPO 8.27 Essential public facilities as defined in RCW 36.70A.200 shall be allowed located in rural lands when:

- The nature of the facility requires spaces for operation not commonly found in UGAs
- Can be self-supporting and not depend upon services of municipalities
- Operational needs require use of rural lands

Operation of such facilities will not affect the activity or nature of rural lands.

GPO 8.28 Clustering of development can only occur where it results in the protection of open space and protects against conflicts with the use of farming or other resource lands. When clustering of development is proposed on land that shares boundaries with public lands and provides existing public access to recreational uses on adjacent public lands, easements for public

access connections shall be considered during development review. The open space portion of the cluster development shall be located to protect wildlife habitat and migration corridors.

GPO 8.29 County restrictions on free-running dogs shall be developed and enforced.

GPO 8.30 Residential development on rural lands will not be approved without adequate water and sewer/septic systems as required by the State and local standards.

GPO 8.31 Residential uses, where permitted, shall be located where farming and forestry activities and opportunities are not negatively impacted.

GPO 8.31A Residences will be located to create the least interference with the movement of farm vehicles and farmlands.

GPO 8.32 The benefits of cluster residential development will be explored with criteria for such to occur in rural areas. Criteria, such as limited density, open space minimums and lot size maximums, will be developed to preserve the rural character existing in the area where clustering is proposed.

GPO 8.32A Cluster residential development in forest areas must be sited to maintain visual compatibility with the surrounding landscape and to limit the removal of natural vegetation and trees.

GPO 8.33 Planned Unit Developments (PUD) in rural areas can only be established where such developments will not result in high density environments which require urban services and reduce maintenance of rural character.

GPO 8.34 Innovative housing developments which preserve rural character will be encouraged.

GPO 8.35 Future amendments should consider placing more emphasis on public benefits that can be accessed and enjoyed by the general public, such as public access trails, publicly accessible formal and informal recreation features, and contiguous open space protected in perpetuity through conservation easements.

GPO 8.36 Public benefits of cluster platting that are provided as Transfer Development Rights lots shall be specifically identified on recorded plats and maintained through easements, covenants, plat notes or other mechanisms.

8.2.4.2. Rural Working

Purpose

- Provide preservation of agriculture activities where producers can live and work on their own lands separate from Resource Lands.