

II. Introduction

Policy Framework for the Buildable Lands Report

In 1997, the Washington State legislature adopted the Buildable Lands amendment to the Growth Management Act (GMA), RCW 36.70A.215. The amendment required a review and evaluation program to be implemented in six counties (King, Snohomish, Pierce, Thurston, Kitsap, and Clark). Components of the review and evaluation program include annual data collection, periodic evaluation reports, and adoption of measures, where needed, to ensure sufficient capacity to accommodate anticipated growth. Countywide Planning Policy (CPP) FW-1 Step 5(b) establishes the review and evaluation program in King County. This report responds to that policy as well as the requirements set forth in RCW 36.70.215.

King County and the other five counties must submit a comprehensive Buildable Lands evaluation report to the State every five years. The first report was completed in September, 2002. This second five-year Buildable Lands Report (BLR) is due to the State in September, 2007. It contains data on residential and commercial land development in King County's 39 cities and unincorporated Urban areas during the years 2001 through 2005. It also contains an updated inventory of land supply (in acres) and land capacity (in housing units, building square feet, and jobs) as of early 2006 to accommodate growth needs through 2022. As such, the 2007 BLR supplements and extends the data in the 2002 BLR.

The focus of this report is on the designated Urban Growth Area (UGA) of King County. The CPPs and the King County Comprehensive Plan establish the UGA boundary to encompass all incorporated cities and towns in the county along with unincorporated areas planned for urban growth. State law requires that UGAs "include areas and densities sufficient to permit urban growth that is projected to occur in the county for the succeeding 20-year period" (see RCW.36.70A.110(2)). The Buildable Lands evaluation represents a mid-course check that this important GMA requirement is being met in King County.

Growth anticipated for the 20-year planning period is set forth in the CPPs in terms of local growth targets for households and jobs. Updated targets for each city and urban unincorporated subarea were adopted into the CPPs in fall 2002 for a planning period extending from 2001 through 2022. Household Growth Targets are based on projections of population growth in King County released by the State Office of Financial Management in early 2002. The vast majority (96%) of the county's population growth is targeted to Urban areas. Job Growth Targets are based on employment forecasts prepared by the Puget Sound Regional Council in 2002.

Both Household and Job Growth Targets must be accommodated through provision of sufficient land suitable for development under county and city plans and regulations. The Buildable Lands analysis determines the capacity of that land based on actual densities achieved in recent development. In this way, the BLR looks both backward at observed patterns and trends, and forward in assessing the continued ability to provide for anticipated growth. Altogether, the planning period, growth targets, and review and evaluation program established in the Countywide Planning Policies provide a common framework for assessing collective and individual success in accommodating growth consistent with local plans, CPPs, and the Growth Management Act.

Consistent with RCW 36.70A.215, the King County Buildable Lands Report is **not** intended to represent 1) a forecast of the amount or rate of future population or economic growth in the county, 2) an analysis of the market feasibility, attractiveness, or availability of any particular parcel for

residential or non-residential development, 3) an assessment of the current or future affordability of land or housing, or 4) an evaluation of the sufficiency of current infrastructure capacity to accommodate growth. Rather, the report is intended to provide technical data and analysis, of a scope that is defined and limited by the GMA and state agency guidelines¹, as a basis for subsequent policy review and potential action by the county and cities.

Countywide Coordination

Buildable Lands implementation in King County is a collaborative effort of all 40 jurisdictions carried out under the aegis of the Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC), a formal policy-making body of elected officials from the county and cities. It consists primarily of coordination among relatively independent local efforts, with guidance from countywide staff and oversight from the GMPC. Coordination for the 2007 BLR was accomplished through the following mechanisms:

- **Technical assistance and project coordination** was provided to local governments countywide by Suburban Cities Association (SCA) staff in partnership with the Growth Information Team in the King County Budget Office. This assistance included collecting and disseminating required data, analyzing geographic information systems (GIS) and other data, reviewing technical work produced by local jurisdiction staff, maintaining a countywide Buildable Lands database, and preparing and producing the 2007 evaluation report.
- **Technical guidelines** for data collection and analysis were prepared by SCA and distributed for use by local staff. The guidelines are consistent with *State Buildable Lands Program Guidelines* (CTED 2000) and the recommendations of the King County Land Capacity Task Force (GMPC 1995, 1997).
- **Standardized worksheets and data templates** were developed by SCA and distributed for use by local staff. The worksheets provided a common format for data reporting and analysis, and provide the basis for the data as presented in this report.
- Between September and December 2006, King County and SCA held a series of **technical staff forums**. The forums provided an additional platform to disseminate program information and to respond to questions from local planning and technical staff.
- Buildable Lands work was also guided by the King County **planning directors group**, who were briefed in 2006 and 2007 on program details and progress toward completion of the 2007 BLR.
- Finally, a **staff steering committee** representing King County, City of Seattle, City of Bellevue, and Suburban Cities Association collaborated in reviewing and approving a countywide methodology, the overall review and evaluation framework, and contents of the 2007 Buildable Lands Report.

Such coordination ensured that the Buildable Lands evaluation was carried out in a broadly consistent and comparable manner throughout King County, while allowing for limited local variations to account for differing land use and market characteristics, data resources, and local land use policies.

¹ *Buildable Lands Program Guidelines*, Washington State Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development, 2000.

Progress from 2002 BLR to 2007 BLR

The first King County Buildable Lands Report was completed in September 2002. Subsequent to that report, King County and its cities took on policy changes and technical work that set the stage for the completion of the 2007 BLR.

First, in late 2002, the GMPC adopted new Household and Job Growth Targets for the 2001-2022 planning period. These targets, based on the State Office of Financial Management 2002 population projections, supplanted the 1993-2012 CPP targets that were the basis for the evaluation in the 2002 BLR. The new targets, along with the data in the 2002 BLR, provided the basis for an Urban Growth Area review in early 2003. They also led to adoption of local measures to ensure sufficient capacity in each jurisdiction to accommodate targeted growth (see Reasonable Measures discussion below).

Second, the county and cities continued to collect land use and land development data on an annual basis, for both residential and commercial/industrial development. Highlights of that work have been reported periodically in the land use bulletin of the King County Benchmark Report. A summary of those data for the full 5-year review period (2001-2005) is presented in Chapter IV of this report.

Third, staff conducted a review of the methodology used in the 2002 BLR, and made changes where appropriate for use in the 2007 BLR. Overall, the technical framework for the 2007 Buildable Lands Report is consistent with that used in the 2002 report. New and updated elements of the methodology include the following:

- Assumed future densities were updated based on actual densities achieved 2001-2005, which were generally higher than the densities used in the 2002 Buildable Lands analysis
- Assumed land needs for rights-of-way and public purposes were updated based on observed development patterns 2001-2005, which generally resulted in higher discounts than used in the 2002 Buildable Lands analysis
- The analysis incorporated information on critical areas ordinance updates and other changes to local regulations adopted since 2002
- Market factor discounts were reviewed and revised for some locations in the county
- Assumed residential vacancy rates were used to convert housing units to households.

The King County Buildable Lands methodology is subject to ongoing refinements in response to best available data and input from local staff, stakeholders, and policy makers. King County and its cities have endeavored to improve the accuracy and completeness of the data reported in the 2007 BLR and will continue to monitor actual development in comparison with assumptions and definitions in advance of the next report due 5 years from now in 2012.

Fourth, more intensive data collection and analysis began in fall 2006 and continued through summer 2007. This involved major investments of staff time at both the countywide and local jurisdiction level, especially within larger municipalities. The product of these efforts is a database that is the source of the findings reported in the 2007 BLR.

Fifth, staff met with major stakeholders in order to exchange information and perspectives on the methodology and data. In June 2006, staff met with representatives of development industry and environmental groups to brief them on preparations for the 2007 Buildable Lands Report and to solicit input from them on technical methodology and scope of the evaluation. Attendees included the Seattle-King County Association of Realtors, the King-Snohomish Master Builders Association, the Housing Partnership, Futurewise, and the Cascade Land Conservancy. In June 2007, staff met with representatives of the same stakeholder groups to brief them on the preliminary findings of the

Buildable Lands evaluation and the anticipated contents of the 2007 BLR, as well as to discuss interpretation of these findings.

Finally, staff reported to the Growth Management Planning Council in 2005, 2006, and 2007 on activities related to Buildable Lands and preparations for the 2007 BLR. Each GMPC meeting included an opportunity for public comment. Milestones achieved at GMPC included the following:

- At its September 21, 2005 meeting, the GMPC directed staff to proceed with a general scope of work for the 2007 BLR.
- At its September 20, 2006 meeting, staff briefed the GMPC on the Buildable Lands methodology updates, then in progress. The GMPC approved of the work to date and directed staff to proceed with data analysis for the 2007 BLR.
- Finally, staff presented a preliminary draft Buildable Lands evaluation to the GMPC at its June 20, 2007 meeting. At that time, the GMPC directed staff to proceed with finalizing the report as well as to prepare a motion for GMPC action at its October 2007 meeting that would recognize the final BLR and its findings. Similar to the process of amending Countywide Planning Policies, GMPC recognition of the BLR is subject to adoption by the King County Council followed by ratification by cities.²

Reasonable Measures Responses to Buildable Lands

“Reasonable measures” is a term that refers to the policy responses to the Buildable Lands evaluation that are required to address any identified “inconsistencies” between actual development and adopted policies, plans, and regulations (see RCW 36.70A.215(4)). The State Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (CTED) has provided guidance on reasonable measures. In a March 16, 2007 advisory letter to cities and counties, CTED stated: “Counties and cities must examine the BLR and make a determination of whether their plans and regulations remain consistent with countywide planning policies in providing land suitable for development sufficient to accommodate anticipated population and employment growth. Counties and cities also should identify inconsistencies between actual and planned development patterns and densities, where such inconsistencies may prevent local governments from accommodating growth.”

Reasonable measures may include amendments to comprehensive plans or development regulations, public investments in infrastructure and amenities, or other public actions that may reasonably be expected to address inconsistencies between planned and actual growth and to increase housing and/or job capacity. RCW 36.70A.215 further requires annual monitoring of the effectiveness of any measures adopted.

The 2002 BLR found that capacity for housing and employment UGA-wide, as well as in the majority of individual jurisdictions, was sufficient, based on actual densities achieved under GMA plans, to accommodate CPP growth targets then in effect for the 1993-2012 planning period. However, the report also found that a handful of cities fell short of needed capacity to accommodate their individual targets.

As noted above, the GMPC adopted new growth targets in late 2002, shortly after completion of the 2002 BLR. Growth targets for the new 2001-2022 planning period supplanted the 1993-2012 targets in the CPPs. As part of the UGA review in early 2003, the need for reasonable measures was re-

² This course of action is consistent with recommendation of the State Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development that “the completed BLR be acknowledged by the adoption of a resolution or ordinance by the appropriate legislative body.” See letter from CTED to counties and cities covered by the Buildable Lands requirement, dated March 16, 2007.

evaluated based on comparing the new policy targets with capacity estimates in the 2002 BLR. Again, several jurisdictions were found to have insufficient capacity (under plans and regulations in place as of early 2001) to meet their targets.

Largely within the context of major updates to comprehensive plans required by GMA by December 2004, cities with capacity shortfalls adopted measures intended to ensure sufficient capacity for 2001-2022 Household and Job Growth Targets. Those measures are documented in a September 2005 staff report to GMPC. Selected data indicators of the effectiveness of the measures were also identified for follow-up annual monitoring. Table 2.1, below, lists the cities and measures to be adopted.

Table 2.1: Reasonable Measures Reported to GMPC, September 2005

	Affected Cities	Measures to Accommodate Growth Targets (2001-2022)
Residential	Carnation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rezones in several areas of city
	Federal Way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow 5-story wood frame construction • Neighborhood Business rezone • Multifamily tax exemption • Planned Action SEPA for Urban Center • Increased height limit in Urban Center
	Kirkland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designation, subarea plan, and zoning for new Totem Lake Urban Center • Rose Hill rezones • Density bonuses for affordable housing
	Lake Forest Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lake Forest Park Town Center redevelopment • Residential clustering • Cottage housing
	SeaTac	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow 5-story wood frame construction • Revise ADU regulations
	Tukwila	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure investments and regulatory changes to allow and encourage more housing development in the Urban Center
Employment	Kirkland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designation, subarea plan, and zoning for new Totem Lake Urban Center • Rose Hill rezones
	Lake Forest Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lake Forest Park Town Center redevelopment
	Sammamish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sammamish Town Center redevelopment • Implement comprehensive plan policy to boost employment in existing commercial areas
	Shoreline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic development through implementation of the city's Strategic Plan

With barely more than a year's worth of data collected and analyzed so far, it is premature to draw any conclusions in the 2007 BLR about the effectiveness of the measures adopted. However, the capacity analyses for each city completed for the 2007 BLR are perhaps the most comprehensive measure of the effectiveness of local plan amendments and implementing regulations to accommodate targeted growth. With one exception, this report (see Chapters V and VII) finds that all cities on this list have now demonstrated sufficient capacity, based on actual densities observed under current plans and zoning, to accommodate their 2001-2022 growth targets.

The data and findings presented in this report, particularly the evaluation of the sufficiency of land and capacity to accommodate targeted growth, are the basis for determining whether any additional reasonable measures are required of the county or any city.

Report Components and Organization

The remainder of this report is in five main chapters.

- Chapter III describes the countywide methodology and assumptions used in the analysis. (Technical Appendices A-C, at the end of the report, document definitions, factors, and assumptions used by each jurisdiction in their local implementation of the countywide Buildable Lands methodology.)
- Chapter IV summarizes measures of development activity for the 5-year period, 2001 through 2005. The chapter presents data on the amount, type, and density of residential, commercial, and industrial development. Progress toward attaining growth targets set forth in the Countywide Planning Policies is also reported, including both permitted development and employment data. Findings are reported for the Urban Growth Area (UGA) as a whole, four planning subareas of the UGA, and individual cities and urban unincorporated subareas. Finally, the chapter analyzes development trends from the 1996-2000 period to the 2001-2005 period.
- Chapter V presents the findings of the land supply and capacity analysis. Data include land supply (measured in acres) and capacity to accommodate growth (in housing units, square feet of floor area, and jobs) as of approximately January 2006. Sufficiency of housing and job capacity to meet anticipated growth needs is evaluated by comparison with CPP Household and Job Growth Targets for the remainder of the planning period (2006-2022). Finally, the chapter compares the findings of this analysis with the findings contained in the 2002 BLR.
- Chapter VI summarizes residential development trends in Rural and Resource areas and provides summary information on potentially developable lots in these areas.
- Chapter VII provides detail on each jurisdiction in Urban King County. For each city and unincorporated subarea, a four-page data profile covers residential development activity, residential land supply and capacity, commercial-industrial development activity, non-residential land supply and capacity, comparisons with remaining growth targets, and comparisons with data for the 1996-2000 review period.

For the purposes of target setting and growth monitoring and analysis, the UGA has been divided into four planning subareas. These subareas provide a framework for presenting and analyzing the data in the 2007 BLR. The subareas, which are shown on the map in the inside cover of this report, are defined as follows:

SeaShore	Seattle, Shoreline, Lake Forest Park and unincorporated North Highline
East County	15 cities east of Lake Washington as well as Eastside unincorporated areas within the Urban Growth Boundary
South County	15 cities (from Burien, Tukwila, and Renton south) as well as South County urban unincorporated areas
Rural Cities	Cities not connected to the contiguous UGA, including Skykomish, Duvall, Carnation, North Bend, Snoqualmie, and Enumclaw as well as the Urban Growth Areas (Rural City UGAs) that surround these cities.