Talking Points for Kitsap County Comprehensive Plan Conversations about Changes in Land Use and Zoning (Draft 1-30-23)[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. *Mission/Vision:* We encourage all Subarea and Neighborhood Advisory Councils to consider the recommended **revisions to the County’s mission & visions** in the document entitled *Changes to Kitsap County Mission and Vision of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan Proposed by the Kitsap Environmental Coalition.* The document provides the language and shift in thinking—a mindset change—that supports the health and well-being of the planet and all of life. This **change needs to come from communities** and areas of the county. This cannot be done top down.

2. *Goals Statements:* The goals given in in the current Comp Plan collectively appear to be a wish list unbounded by a recognition that we must live **within nature’s planetary boundaries**. **Goals need to be viewed collectively** to see if they can jointly be met. They need to collectively be within nature’s planetary boundaries and within the resources of the county. They need to be thought of systemically, that is, in combination with one another.

3. *Environmental Impact Statements*: Environmental Impact Statements need to **include attention to Climate Change** whether or not the Regional Council and state are calling for them. We live in an ecologically sensitive county that affects not only the residents of the County but Puget Sound and the many life forms that live in the county and in Puget Sound.

4. *UGAs and rural development:* The 2024 Comp Plan Update is focused on ensuring that adequate density is in place in UGAs for the expected growth in population for the County. Intense attention is being directed to these areas including attention to infrastructure, connection to transportation, and jobs.

It is our understanding from discussions with County staff, **only limited attention is being directed to the rural areas in this Update**. The county is planning to focus attention on the rural areas at a later time after this Comp Plan Update is finished. **However, zoning requests are being consider that impinge on rural areas.**

All zoning requests related to LAMIRDs and most any **requests in rural areas should be put on hold** until there is concerted attention to the rural areas. It would be a serious mistake to allow changes in zoning such as a change from Rural Wooded to Rural Residential at this time for several reasons:

a. The type of housing that would be encouraged by changing zoning from 1 housing unit/20 acres to 1 unit/5 acres does not encourage **housing for middle- to low-income families**. The price of such lots would be in the price range of upper and upper-middle class individuals. This undermines the move to more affordable housing. It perpetuates a mismatch between the current diversity of incomes among the population and available housing.

b. A change in zoning from rural wooded (or other such zone) to rural residential (or other more dense living) needs to be considered in light of the **relationship to rural economies such as farming and food security** for the County as a whole. We must encourage zoning and codes that encourage farming and food security.

5. *Preferred Alternative and Environmental Impact Statement:* The current framing of the EIS for the preferred alternatives is inadequate. Even if this follows the state guidelines, we want the county to be more rigorous in this regard (which they are allowed to do). **The EIS seems to be done in relationship to 3 or 4 alternatives rather than attending to the overall impact** on the county through knowledge of the **bigger picture** and development in the county.

6. *Economy:* It’s time to **redefine what is meant by a healthy economy and/or economic growth.** Currently Kitsap County has this vision for its economy: “*Thriving Local Economy: A well-educated workforce and strategic investment in county infrastructure prompt businesses to expand or locate in Kitsap County, creating well-paying jobs and enhancing our quality of life.”* We encourage a “*Responsible, Thriving Local Economy: Kitsap County government policies, practices, and infrastructure promote a local economy that provides a living wage and quality of life for all; the ability to live and work in one’s community; and protects and rejuvenates our ecosystems in the midst of climate change.”* This shift in how we view our economy means growth in the health of people and the environment, not growth measured necessarily in dollars.

7. *Quality data for decision-making:* High **quality data about the well-being of residents and the natural environment** needs to be used in decision making about land use. The opinions and vested interest of various stakeholders needs to be secondary to the well-being of all of life.

8. *Accountability:*  Accountability procedures need to be put in place to provide the basis for **determining if the goals can and are being met**. The goals need to **be stated such that they can be validly measured** qualitatively and/or quantitatively.

9. *Monitoring:* The Comp Plan and processes of the county must include strong monitoring of goals and implementation plans. Monitoring needs to **specify criteria and data sources** to determine if goals and plans are being met. Evaluation of the monitoring data is needed to determine if adjustments can be made in plans to accomplish the criteria. **Simply monitoring to see if something has (or has not) happened is inadequate.** Criteria need to be specified to **support continual improvement to** reach the collective set of goals in the Updated Comp Plan and effectively implement plans with attention to systemic interactions between goals and areas of the Plan.

10. *How variances are handled:* Environmental regulations/requirements have increased over time. The County **guidelines on allowable variances from requirements** also need to be updated. The variance guidelines need to more severely limit allowable variances to ensure that environmental requirements are meaningfully being met. If the variance guidelines are not rigorous aligned with new environmental requirements, staff are in the awkward position of being urged by property owners to allow variances in keeping with past practice and requirements that undermine new regulations. **Any variance that is being monitored needs to have data-based criteria that can be used to determine if impacts are being achieved as specified in a variance request.**

1. Prepared by Kitsap Environmental Coalition team focused on Kitsap County Comprehensive Plan 2024 Update. For discussion and further revisions based on responses and ongoing conversations with Kitsap County residents. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)