

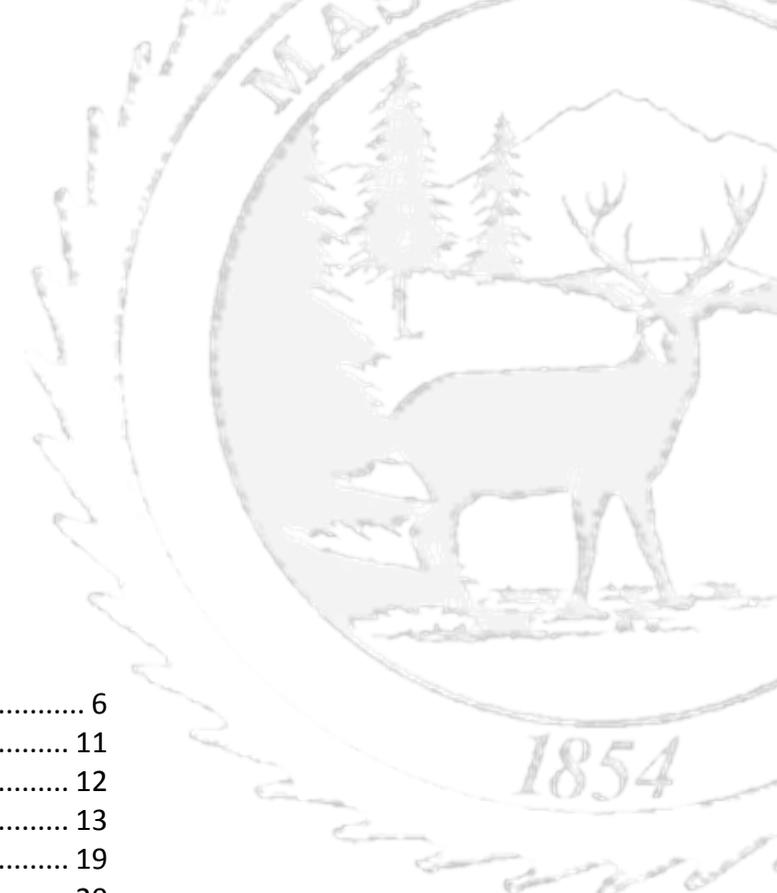


CHAPTER 4 - RURAL ELEMENT

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I. Introduction

Mason County is unique for its 700 miles of beautiful coastlines, lakes, rivers and streams with outstanding air and water quality, vistas and mountain views, extensive recreation and tourism opportunities, and unmatched tranquility. It is one of the few remaining truly rural counties in all of Washington state. Mason County contains over 540,000 acres of national forest, parklands, and other rural lands including long term commercial forest lands. Rural lands cover over 60% of the County. Employment in Mason County is still largely resource based with a strong history of forestry and a growing aquaculture industry leading the nation in shellfish production.

Consistent with the Washington State Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A), the Rural Element of Mason County's Comprehensive Plan establishes broad goals and policies guiding rural development, protecting critical areas, reducing sprawl and maintaining rural character (See Figure 1. Map of Mason County Rural Lands). It facilitates varied rural economic uses on rural lands, while protecting and maintaining the rural character and scale. The Rural Element also summarizes current conditions, measures rural development, and provides background information on the rural land use designations.

Washington's Growth Management Act specifies,

"The Rural Element [of the Comprehensive Plan] shall permit rural development, forestry, and agriculture in rural areas. The rural element shall provide for a variety of rural densities, uses, essential public facilities, and rural governmental services needed to serve the permitted densities and uses. To achieve a variety of rural densities and uses, counties may provide for clustering, density transfer, design guidelines, conservation easements, and other innovative techniques that will accommodate appropriate rural densities and uses that are not characterized by urban growth and that are consistent with rural character."

In 2016, the population of the rural area was estimated to be 45,520 (including the small number of residents living on designated Inholding Lands), as shown in Table 1. This was about three quarters of the total County population. By 2036, the rural population is expected to be about 55,660. The rate of growth in the rural area over the next twenty years is expected to be slower than the Urban Growth Areas and Shelton.

Table 1. Mason County Population Projection 2016-2036

MASON COUNTY AND URBAN GROWTH AREA				
20 YEAR POPULATION PROJECTION				
	2016	2036	Population Increase	Percent Increase 2016-2036
Mason County Total	62,320	83,800	21,480	34%
City of Shelton	10,070	16,200	6,130	61%
Shelton UGA	3,740	7,220	3,480	93%
Urban Growth Areas (Allyn, Belfair)	2,990	4,720	1,730	58%
Rural County	45,520	55,660	10,140	22%

Source: Washington State Office of Financial Management

II. Measuring Rural Development

The rural lands are those lands which are outside of the designated urban growth areas and are not considered natural resource lands. However, this Chapter does include discussion of natural resource lands including their planned development to ensure protection of natural resources, consistency with the rural character and compatibility surrounding areas. Through adherence to goals and policies guiding rural residential, commercial and industrial development in Mason County, will protect and preserve rural lands for future generations.

Mason County used several methods to consider urban and rural growth trends in the process of updating the Comprehensive Plan. Results generally show an overall percent growth in population of 34 percent, with 53 percent of new residents moving to urban areas and 47 percent moving to rural areas over the 20 year planning period reflecting the general success of growth management planning by the County and communities within it. This is especially notable as the urban growth areas in Mason County only account for 2 percent of total acres.

III. Washington State Growth Management Act Guidance

Washington State Growth Management Act (**RCW 36.70A.011**) established several principles for rural planning in including :

- Recognition of the importance of rural lands and rural character to Washington's economy, its people, and its environment, while respecting regional differences. Rural lands and rural-based economies enhance the economic desirability of the state, help to preserve traditional economic activities, and contribute to the state's overall quality of life.
- A finding that in order to retain and enhance the job base in rural areas, rural counties must have flexibility to create opportunities for business development. Rural counties must have the flexibility to retain existing businesses and allow them to expand. The legislature recognized that not all business developments in rural counties require an urban level of services; and that many businesses in rural areas fit within the definition of rural character identified by the local planning unit.
- A finding that in defining rural elements of County Comprehensive Plans under RCW 36.70A.070(5), a county should foster land use patterns and develop a local vision of rural character that will help preserve rural-based economies and traditional rural lifestyles; encourage the economic prosperity of rural residents; foster opportunities for small-scale, rural-based employment and self-employment; permit the operation of rural-based agricultural (including aquaculture), commercial, recreational, and tourist businesses that are consistent with existing and planned land use patterns; be compatible with the use

of the land by wildlife and for fish and wildlife habitat; foster the private stewardship of the land and preservation of open space; and enhance the rural sense of community and quality of life.

IV. Rural Character

Mason County's unique rural landscape is characterized by over 700 miles of shoreline, open spaces with natural vegetation; a variety of rural residential densities; farms, forests, mining, and aquatic resource areas; small unincorporated rural communities; small, rural commercial and industrial developments; and nationally and regionally important recreation areas.

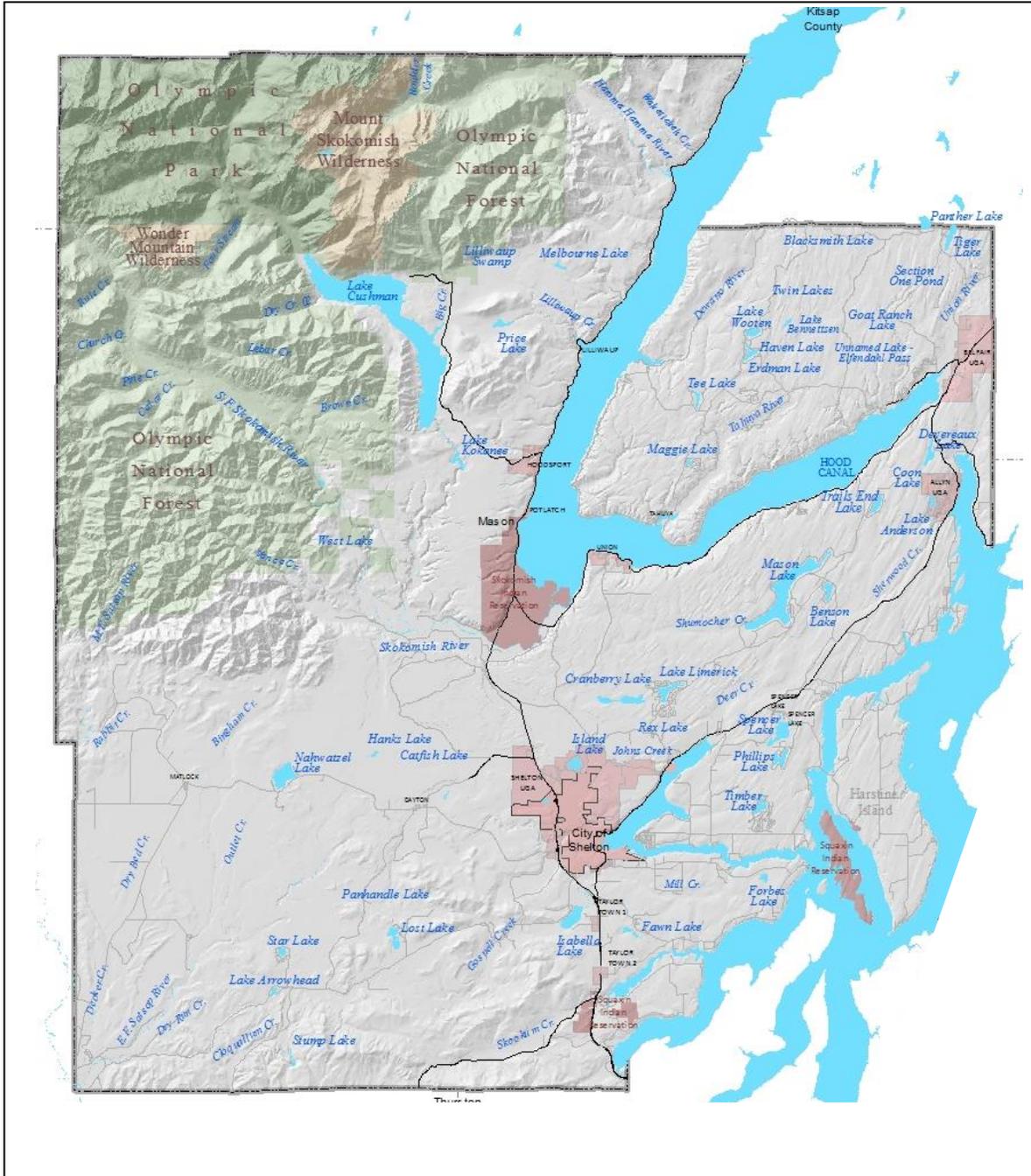
Rural areas also include well-separated small communities located along major arterials and state highways that serve the needs of surrounding rural residents and enterprises. These communities are characterized by limited public services, small commercial uses, and single family houses on larger lots. Community services may include a school, post office, fire stations, churches, community centers and granges. There may also be some rural multifamily development.

About 387,000 acres in Mason County fall under one of the rural land zoning designations. These lands are outside of the Urban Growth Areas and the National Forest Lands.

Mason County's Vision

"Mason County will remain a primarily rural county, characterized by quiet tranquility, privacy, natural views, and rural enterprise. Although rural character means different things to different people, aspects of it include: natural vistas, fish, shellfish, wildlife, and natural ecosystems; fewer restrictions and more privacy than in an urban area; the easy operation of resource based industries such as timber, mining, agriculture, and aquaculture; and the close ties of family and community to the land."

Figure 1. Mason County Rural Lands



It is important that lands designated for long term commercial forests, national park lands and national forest lands remain intact. These lands combined account for approximately 57 percent of the land area of Mason County and are not included in the developable lands analysis.

As shown in Table 2, Federal lands and lands of the Tribal Nations within Mason County account for approximately 35 percent of Mason County. The County Assessor does not maintain data on Federal or Tribal lands. As shown in Table 3, rural Mason County’s vacant lands are nearly a quarter of total land area.

Table 2. Urban and Rural Land Area (Acres) within Mason County

Area	Total Acres	Percent of Total
Rural Lands	387,300	63%
Olympic National Forest	154,080	25%
Waters	57,600	9%
Tribal Nations	8,180	1%
Shelton Urban Growth Area	5,500	.9%
City of Shelton	3,900	.6%
Belfair Urban Growth Area	2,500	.4%
Allyn Urban Growth Area	1,000	.1%
Total County	620,060	100%

Methods

By comparing two different data sets, the Assessor’s data and the County zoning data, we see a clearer picture of trends in land use. It should be noted that the Assessor’s data and the County zoning data are two different data sets used for different purposes. While the categories are similar, the total acreage will differ. For example, the County zoning data will not include Tribal lands or Olympic National Forest, but may count some acres of water. In order to get to a general capacity for dwelling units, parcel data was first organized by current land use in accordance with the codes as provided by the County Assessor’s Office.

Zoning district data obtained from Mason County Geographic Information Systems (GIS) was also compiled in order to determine the number of parcels and amount of acreage in each area that is currently devoted to various land uses, land use codes were grouped into broader land use categories (i.e. Residential, Commercial, Transportation, etc.). Once divided by existing land use, the zoning classification of each parcel was determined. This shows the current land use and what its potential residential use was according to its zoning district. This type of calculation and analysis was conducted for each of the districts and zones.

Table 3. Land Use Inventory in Rural Mason County (Acres)

Land use	Total Acres	Percent Total	Improved (building value >\$20k)	Percent Total	Unimproved (building value <\$20k)	Percent Total	Total Acres 2005	Percent Change
Forest/Water	276,848	60.70%	5,051	2%	271,796	98%	353,676	-22%
Vacant	111,912	24.50%	4,813	4%	107,099	96%	52,656	112%
Residential	40,201	8.80%	36,008	90%	4,193	10%	33,137	21%
Government	8,638	1.90%	1,910	22%	6,728	78%	na	
Agriculture/ Aquaculture	7,633	1.70%	3,260	43%	4,373	57%	9,845	-22%
Commercial	4,361	1.00%	3,192	73%	1,169	27%	3,538	23%
Transportation	2,440	0.50%	502	21%	1,938	79%	2,368	3%
Utilities	1,980	0.40%	461	23%	1,519	77%	2,079	-5%
Parks	1,968	0.40%	832	42%	1,136	58%	na	
Mining	147	0.03%	43	29%	104	71%	152	-3%

Source: Mason County Assessor's Office, 2015

Table 4 shows the current land use as well as potential residential use according to its zoning district. For example, a parcel with an existing land use code of vacant in the Accesser's data and located within a Rural Commercial zoning district has a one dwelling unit per

acre potential, according to the Development Regulations for that zone adding at least 2.5 new residents per dwelling unit to the area. This inventory was conducted for each of the districts and zones.

Table 4. Rural Land Capacity Summary

Zone	Total Acres	Total Undeveloped Acres	Dwelling Units/Acre	Potential Units	Times 2.5 persons/unit
Inholding Lands	13,474	10,364	1/5	2,073	5,172
Rural Residential 2.5	976	527	1/2.5	211	527
Rural Residential 5	107,283	68,471	1/5	13,694	34,236
Rural Residential 10	35,875	32,974	1/10	3,297	8,244
Rural Residential 20	114,206	108,374	1/20	5,419	13,547
Agricultural Resource	7,019	4,205			
Long Term Commercial Forest	301,430	297,540			
Rural Tourist	4,457	1,658			
Rural Tourist Campground	372	256			
Rural Commercial 1	59	7			
Rural Commercial 2	110	46	1/lot	25	63
Rural Commercial 3	139	22	1/lot	26	65
Rural Commercial 5	17	0			
Rural Industrial	309	69			
Rural Natural Resource	676	367			
Totals	586,402	524,880		24,745	61,854

Source: Mason County Geographic Information System, Zoning Data

VI. Open Space

Open space land is an essential component of rural character and is valuable to the community for a number of reasons. It can provide recreational opportunities, it is aesthetically pleasing, it enhances the quality of life in urban areas, and it increases property values. It creates natural boundaries, which can act as greenbelts and define neighborhood identity and can protect natural resources such as groundwater recharge areas, streams, soils, tidal areas, agricultural areas, and wildlife. Open space often provides habitat areas for wildlife. Open space also includes traditional cultural landscapes.

There are three general types of open space land including:

- **Private open space** can include those farms, forest, and other parcels of undeveloped land that are privately held.
- **Common use open space** is land within a residential development or other development that is designated for common access by the residents of the development or by the general community.
- **Public open space** is publicly-owned land available for recreational use of the entire community. Open water areas, such as the Hood Canal or lakes, is also often considered as open space because it creates a sense of openness.

See Mason County's Planning Map Library online at the Mason County Website for maps including Open Space.

Mason County enjoys extensive open spaces. In addition to the Olympic National Park and Olympic National Forest, there are significant tracts of state owned or privately held timber. Farmlands in river valleys, particularly the Skokomish, also are open space lands. A detailed listing of park and recreation facilities in the County is included in the Capital Facilities element of the Mason County Comprehensive Plan as well as the Parks and Trails Plan for Mason County.

Continued growth in Mason County is likely to increase the pressure for conversion of existing open space to other land uses. As land values rise, the potential economic returns will likely increase the pressure on owners of larger tracts of undeveloped land to sell or develop their properties.

The comprehensive plan provides for the preservation, protection, and enhancement of open space. It does this by planning to accommodate residential and commercial growth in the County's Urban Growth Areas of Allyn, Belfair and Shelton. Also, the comprehensive plan provides for incentives to cluster development, as well as requiring the preservation of open space.

Open space preserved under the plan include: Long-Term Commercial Forest lands, Agricultural Resource Lands, local parks, state parks and other state lands, the Olympic National Park and the Olympic National Forest, land slide hazard areas and their associated buffers, flood ways, streams and their associated vegetation area, wetlands and their associated buffer areas, traditional cultural landscapes, lands preserved as part of a clustered development plan, lands preserved as part of the designation of a fully contained community or a master planned resort, and major utility corridors.

VII. Rural Water

Pursuant to RCW 19.27.097 and RCW 58.17.110, Mason County legally cannot issue a permit for a building requiring potable water or approve subdivision applications unless the applicant has a lawful and adequate water supply. Typically, the applicant provides a letter of availability from a public water source such as PUD or otherwise demonstrates that they will not interfere with senior water rights.

Collaborative water planning is underway in Mason County to ensure compliance with state laws and maximize water conservation, reuse, and recycling. See Mason County Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 7 – Utilities, for additional detail.

Watersheds

Land use and land planning is also organized by watersheds. Mason County includes seven watersheds: Case Inlet, Chehalis, Hood Canal, Lower Hood Canal, Oakland Bay, Skokomish, and Totten-Little Skookum. Drainage patterns determine the boundaries of watersheds.

Watershed management plans or action plans have been adopted for three watersheds: Totten-Little Skookum, Oakland Bay, and Lower Hood Canal. Sub-area plans were developed for North Mason County (the Lower Hood Canal), South-East Mason County (the Totten-Little Skookum), and Harstine Island (part of the Totten-Little Skookum). The watershed plans were developed in cooperation with adjoining counties that shared the watershed, the Indian Tribes, state agencies and the public, under the guidance of the Puget Sound Water Quality Authority. Information from these plans and goals and policies developed for them have been used in developing the Comprehensive Plan, its policies, and its implementing regulations.

VIII. Strategies for Protecting Critical Areas

Opportunities exist for Mason County to raise awareness and expand use of the land use regulatory tools provided under state law and also incorporated into the Mason County Development Regulations. These tools protect critical areas and help to maintain rural character including, but not limited to:

- **Planned Action Environmental Impact Statements** – The County conducts the required environmental analysis before development is proposed to streamline and incentivize development in desired locations. (RCW 43.21C.031)
- **State Environmental Policy Act Mitigation Fees** – Fees collected to mitigate impacts under SEPA can be used to offset traffic and other impacts. (RCW 43.21C.060)
- **Transfer Development Rights** - voluntary, incentive-based program that allows landowners to sell development rights from their agricultural lands to a developer or other interested party who then can use these rights to increase the density of development at another designated location. (MCC 17.03.037)
- **Clustering** - Clustering development allows grouping of residential structures on a portion of the available land while reserving a significant amount of the site as undeveloped open space. (MCC 16.23)
- **Restoration Planning** - Provides the option to develop a plan, tailored to a specific property, as an alternative to strict adherence to development regulations. Modification of buffers, a streamlined permit process and/or other departures from standards may be permitted on properties that provide a plan of alternative actions that will protect environmental resources and avoid environmental harm. (MCC 8.52.275)
- **Design Guidelines** – Specify that the design, shape, size, and orientation of lots shall be appropriate to the use for which the lots are intended and the character of the area and consistent with the policies of the county comprehensive plan and other land control ordinances. Lot areas in excess of minimum standards may be required for reasons of sanitation, steep slopes, slide hazards, poor drainage, flood hazards, or other unique conditions or features which may warrant protection of the public interest.(MCC 16.38)

- **Voluntary Stewardship Program** - This program is intended to promote local plans that protect and enhance critical areas within areas where agricultural activities are conducted, while maintaining and improving the long-term viability of agriculture in the state of Washington and reducing the conversion of farmland to other uses. These plans establish voluntary incentive programs that encourage good riparian and ecosystem stewardship, protect water quality and fish habitat, and discourage the cessation of agricultural activities.
- **Conservation Easements** – Establish rights in perpetuity to future development which may be acquired by the county on any open space land, farm and agricultural land, and timberland. (Chapter 84.34 RCW)

Example: Green Diamond Conservation Easement

The Green Diamond Resource Company has worked with The Trust for Public Lands to retire thousands of acres of timberland into conservation easements over the next several years. By 2020, it is anticipated that Green Diamond will have retired more than 1,700 units of potential residential development in this conservation process. All of the timberland is in the rural areas; some designated as Long Term Commercial Forest, but mostly zoned rural residential 5, 10 and 20. Rural residential districts are distinguished by the minimum number of acres required for each dwelling unit (e.g. rural residential 5 require a minimum of 5 acres per unit). The total number of units as estimated by Green Diamond to be just over 1,700 was the result of reviewing the build out potential by each zoning district.

IX. Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Development – “LAMIRD”

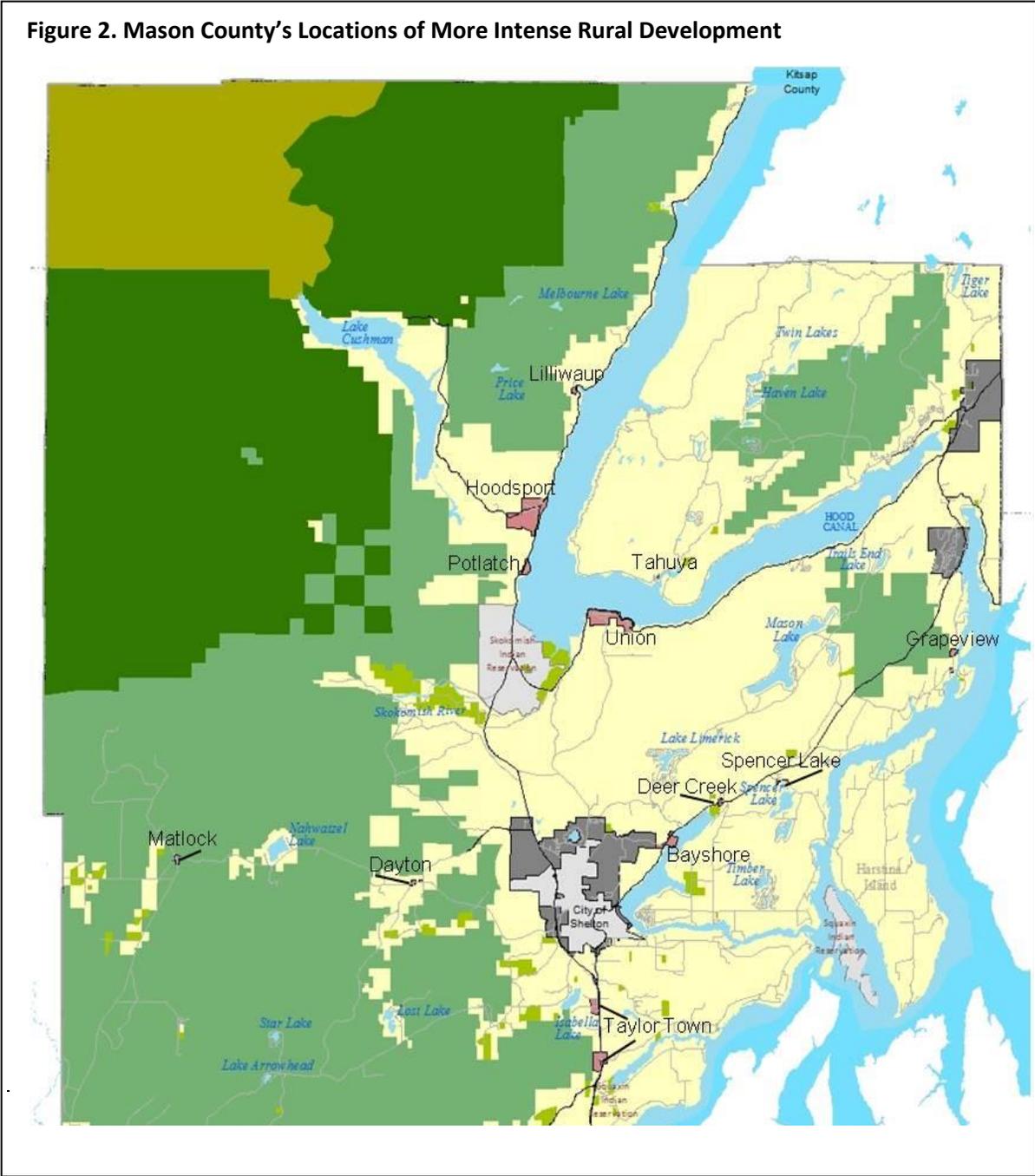
Some land use designations in the rural area allow for a variety of residential densities and rural and natural resource-related businesses that still maintain and protect rural character. The State Department of Commerce calls these areas “limited areas of more intensive rural development” or “LAMIRDS”, as defined in the 1997 amendments to the GMA.

There are different types of these more intensive rural development areas in Mason County that are pictured in Figure 2. and discussed in this section, including:

- Rural Activity Centers
- Hamlets
- Isolated Rural Commercial or Industrial Areas
- Rural Tourism and Recreational Areas
- Master Planned Resorts and Industrial Areas

These more intensive rural development areas developed naturally before land use controls. They provide rural levels of service and convenience to rural residents who otherwise may travel longer distances to for retail, civic, health, and other needs. By designating them within Mason County’s Comprehensive Plan, it ensures they will continue to serve this function.

Figure 2. Mason County's Locations of More Intense Rural Development



These locations of more intense development are critical to Mason County as many of the business are currently located in rural areas. They will also accommodate new development that is consistent with the surrounding rural character. Rural employers represent those business entities that exist outside the Urban Growth Areas. As shown in Table 5, LAMRIDs represent a substantial portion of the Mason County employment base, including:

- 49% of all employers in Mason County
- 78% of all the employed workforce in the county
- 40 % of all the payroll in Mason County

Sole proprietors, or the self-employed in Mason County, are a substantial part of the workforce. Mason County reports 4,668 sole proprietors from its business roles. These businesses outnumber the 1,425 employers with aggregate payroll over three times of the employers with an estimated \$250 million in income forming the backbone of a resilient and adaptable economy.

Nationally, the Small Business Administration reports that 73 percent of all business entities are sole proprietors. However, in Mason County, sole proprietorship is higher at 77 percent, which reinforces the reputation of Mason County businesses’ entrepreneurial spirit.

Using the most recent data available from 2012 through 2016, depending upon the source, this report finds 6,093 business entities within Mason County. These individuals are the ones who labor in the extra bedroom, at the kitchen table or out in the garage and are sometimes called the “gig economy”. They are interspersed throughout almost anonymously, interacting more commonly in the grocery line, at the hardware or at community events. As such, the sole proprietor is more often known as friend or neighbor than the business entity they represent.

Table 5. Employers and Employment in the Rural County

Rural County Employment Employment Sum					
Name	Acreage	Total Employers	With Employees	Number of Employees	Payroll
Rural Mason	387,300	682	573	5,869	\$204 M

Source: Mason County Economic Development Council, 2016

Rural Activity Centers

Rural Activity Centers are unincorporated areas that are characterized by services such as community water, limited commercial uses, and fire protection. They do not necessarily provide services to neighboring residents but do provide job opportunities for rural residents. The Rural Activity Centers within Mason County include Hoodspout, Taylor Town and Union. They cover over thirteen hundred acres of land with an average size of 444 acres. Their 37 employers provide almost \$5 million in income for more than 160 workers.

Generally, Rural Activity Centers include a mix of uses. They serve residents of the surrounding rural area, seasonal residents, and tourists. They also include concentrations of commercial, service, industrial, and civic uses but are not served by urban levels of facilities and services. Residential areas include single-family neighborhoods and some small-scale and low-rise multifamily housing. Businesses typically are found near or on the highway that runs through the community. In Hoodspout the commercial development is primarily concentrated into a small “downtown” area. Union has fewer businesses and more decentralized commercial activity. Taylor Town has small clusters of commercial development near some of the road intersections and a larger number of businesses throughout the area. Existing industrial uses within Rural Activity

Centers are often stand-alone businesses such as welding shops, small shake mills, or food processing operations.

Table 6. Rural and Urban Business Development from 1998 to 2016

Employment Summary			
	1998	2016	Difference
Businesses with known addresses	3,289	5,885	2596
Businesses reporting employment	1,240	1,425	185
Businesses outside UGA’s, RAC’s & Hamlets	62%	49%	-13%
Percent of businesses w/employees outside UGA’s	56%	49%	-7%
Percent of total employees at businesses outside UGA’s	44%	77%	33%
Percent of private payroll generated by businesses outside UGA’s	38%	40%	12%
Percent of existing business types, outside UGA’s, that are not authorized by the Matrix of Permitted uses	76%	76%	0%

Source: Mason County Economic Development Council, 2016

These three areas, Hoodsport, Union and Taylor Town, will experience some limited growth over the next 20 years. Average residential densities will increase as much of the land has already been platted into small lots, many of which are conforming and buildable. Business uses will also grow. The majority of growth will be in retail, commercial, tourism and industrial uses necessary to support the residential growth in the rural area.

Hamlets

Hamlets are intended meet the immediate needs of the rural residents, resource dependent industry, and visitors and are smaller than Rural Activity Centers. They provide a rural level of services and facilities. Hamlets may include one or two civic, community, or retail uses such as a post office, community center, church, grange, or gas station a distance from each other and from the urban centers. They are not intended to compete with the Urban Growth Areas or Rural Activity Centers as employment centers or commercial centers.

Table 7. Inventory of Rural Activity Centers in Mason County

Rural Activity Centers					
Name	Acre	Total	With	#	Payroll
Hoodsport	664	12	12	26	775,500
Union	416	12	9	74	2,593,900
Taylor	253	13	11	67	1,600,700
Total:	1,333	37	32	167	4,970,100

Source: Mason County Economic Development Council, 2016

Mason County has nine Hamlets ranging in size between 9 acres and 111 acres, as shown in Table 8. The average Hamlet in Mason County is 30 acres. There are 11 businesses providing a payroll of over \$400,000 for 25 employees in the Hamlets of Bayshore, Dayton, Deer Creek, Eldon, Grapeview, Lake Cushman, Lilliwaup, Matlock, Potlatch, Spencer Lake, and Tahuya.

Table 8. Inventory of Mason County Hamlets

Hamlets					
Name	Acreage	Total Employers	With Employees	No. Employees	Payroll
Bay Shore	111				
Grapeview 2	34				
Matlock	27				
Deer Creek	25				
Lilliwaup	24				
Dayton	22				
Spencer Lake (west)	11				
Grapeview 1	11				
Spencer Lake (east)	9				
Total:	274	11	11	25	404,607

Source: Mason County Economic Development Council

Note: Numbers below ten suppressed in this table to protect individual employer and employee

Isolated Rural Commercial Areas

In developing its rural commercial and industrial designations, Mason County undertook an extensive review of existing commercial and industrial uses and zoning in the rural area. The County combined this information with an analysis of the commercial, industrial, and natural resource industrial uses allowed in the rural area under the Growth Management Act.

The Rural Commercial (1-4) zoning designations are intended to acknowledge certain significant uses in the rural area that were in existence prior to adoption of Mason County's first Comprehensive Plan. The Rural Commercial zones provide reasonable expansion and use opportunities for these pre-existing commercial areas. The designation is consistent with the Growth Management Act's allowance for "the intensification of development on lots containing isolated nonresidential uses" (RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)(iii)).

Isolated Rural Industrial Areas

These Rural Industrial Areas are small enclaves of industry, which serve the surrounding rural residents, and industrial uses, which manufacture and export a product. These areas are intended to remain and to have the ability to expand, keeping within the rural character of the county.

Rural Tourism and Recreational Areas

Rural Tourist and Recreational Areas reflect existing areas in Mason County and their expansion, and allow for the development of new areas. They consist of recreation/tourism businesses with no permanent residential development, except for those of the owners or caretakers. Such areas may include small scale resorts,

recreational vehicle parks, golf courses, and small stores. These areas must be served by appropriate rural or the extension of urban services. The Rural Tourism and Recreation designation is intended to foster economic development that relies on a rural location and setting and that incorporates the scenic and natural features of the land. This designation is consistent with the type of LAMIRD authorized by RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)(ii).

Cottage Industry

The Cottage Industry designation allows small-scale commercial or industrial activities involving the provision of services or fabrication or production of goods, primarily for clients and markets outside of the immediate urban growth area. This designation may be applied to existing or new businesses, whereas the Rural Commercial designation applies only to businesses that were established as of 1997-98.

Master Planned Resorts and Industrial Areas

A Master Planned Resort is a self contained and fully integrated development in a setting of significant natural amenities that includes short-term visitor accommodations associated with a range of developed on-site indoor or outdoor recreation facilities. It may also include permanent residential uses as an integrated part of the overall resort development. Development of the Master Planned resort is controlled through the planning policies.

Master planned resorts are larger in scale, and involve greater potential impacts on the surrounding area, than uses permitted under the Rural Tourism and Recreation designation. Master Planned Resorts may constitute urban growth outside of urban

growth areas as limited by RCW 36.70A.360 and RCW 36.70A.362. Designation of Master Planned Resorts requires amending the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Maps, prior to, or concurrent with an application for master plan review. The comprehensive plan amendment process should evaluate all the probable significant adverse environmental impacts from the entire proposal, even if the proposal is to be developed in phases, and these impacts shall be considered in determining whether any particular location is suitable for a Master Planned Resort.

Similar to Master Planned Resorts, Counties may establish a process for approval of a major industrial development outside of the UGA for a specific business. A "major industrial development" is defined as a "master planned location for a specific manufacturing, industrial, or commercial business (RCW 36.70A.365).

X. Natural Resource Lands

Natural resources abound in Mason County and provide the foundation for the County's economy. While timber has historically played a prominent role in the economy of the County, other natural resources including agricultural lands, aquaculture and mineral resources, have also fostered economic development within the County.

Natural resource lands receive special protection to discourage their conversion to other uses and maintain long term economic viability. Mason County has designated and protected three types of resource lands. These are Long-Term Commercial Forest Lands, Agricultural Resource Lands, and Mineral Resource Lands of long-term commercial significance. The county also designated forest Inholding Lands that are subject to special restrictions to protect adjacent Long-Term Commercial Forest Lands. In addition to designating these resource lands, the county has adopted protections for agricultural, shorelines management, and forest land uses.

Forest Products

Without question, timber is the foundation upon which Mason County's economy was built. For 200 years, Mason County's extensive forests have supplied logs, lumber, building components, pulp, and other products to national and international markets. Forest Products continue to be an important part of a strong natural resource based economy in Mason County.

Long Term Commercial Forest lands and Forest Products represent the primary land uses throughout Mason County and within each of its seven watersheds. **Appendix A** provides a series of maps including a Long Term Commercial Forest and In Holding Lands Map of Mason County. As previously mentioned in the discussion of Mason County land use, these figures do not include federal and tribal lands. Thus, Long Term Commercial Forest lands and Forestry play an even greater role in the County's land use, due to the acreage that the U.S. Forest Service maintains as well as lands forested by both the Skokomish and Squaxin Island Tribes.

Mason County currently has an abundance of forested lands with long term commercial significance. Although continued population growth will place additional demands on forest resources, these are not expected to significantly affect the County's forest resources during the 20 year planning period. Impacts associated with forestry operations include erosion and sedimentation, noise from machinery and vehicles, fugitive dust, and the visual impacts of harvested areas. The state Department of Natural Resources is responsible for regulating these impacts.

Agriculture

The State of Washington's GMA guidelines define agricultural land as land primarily devoted to the commercial production of horticultural, viticultural, floricultural, dairy, apiary,

vegetable, or animal products or of berries, grain, hay, straw, turf, seed, Christmas trees, or livestock, and that has long term commercial significance for agricultural production. Long term commercial significance includes the growing capacity, productivity, and soil composition of the land for long term commercial production, while considering the land's proximity to population areas, and the possibility of more intense uses of the land.

Agricultural practices have taken place in Mason County since the early days of logging. The clear-cutting practices of those early logging companies opened a considerable amount of County land to agriculture, particularly to dairying and cattle raising. Crop production was limited to the growing of hay, berries and potatoes. In the eastern part of the County where the weather was milder, extensive vineyards and fruit orchards were planted. Despite its rich agricultural history, however, Mason County is not well-endowed with the resources necessary to create a strong competitive advantage for agricultural production. Consequently, agriculture's current role in Mason County's economy is relatively minor. In 1993, there were 320 farms currently in operation in the County covering approximately 20,000 acres. This represented nearly 3.5% of Mason County's land area. In 2016, Mason County had approximately 8,000 acres of designated agricultural land.

Continued growth in Mason County is likely to increase land use conflicts between urban uses and remaining agricultural uses. As land values rise, the potential economic returns will

likely increase the pressure on owners to sell or develop their properties. Much of the agricultural land within the County is located in the rural areas, outside the UGA's.

In order to better conserve agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance, Mason County designated Agricultural Resource Lands in its Resource Ordinance. The amendments also provided for continuing protections for lands in agricultural use, but not qualified as lands of long-term commercial significance.

Aquaculture

Mason County is the largest producer of shellfish in Washington State and Washington is the top shellfish producing state in the nation. Mason County has seen an increase in shellfish farms and revenue from shellfish sales of 25 percent between 2013 and 2005, based on the US Aquaculture Census.

Shellfish farms are significant contributors to Mason County's economy in 2016. Shellfish farming is the second largest employer in Mason County, Washington with over 70 farms generating \$32 million in revenue annually. Shellfish also do their part to reduce the trade deficit. Shellfish grown in Mason County are exported around the world, bringing in millions of dollars from foreign countries each year directly benefitting our local economy as well as federal and state economies.

Shellfish production requires a healthy, functioning ecosystem to provide safe water quality and appropriate quantities of phytoplankton for food. Scientific research indicates well-managed shellfish farming can improve water quality, species diversity, and habitat complexity.

In order to better support shellfish production, Mason County has adopted its Shoreline Master Program and Resource Ordinance. These policy documents provide for continuing protections for aquaculture lands and the watersheds that feed into these lands.

Fish, crustaceans, mollusks, and other aquatic products which are caught or harvested by the public from non-controlled waters or beds are considered wild caught and are not included as aquaculture. Mason County has 25 public access beaches for shellfish harvesting and maintaining and enhancing this access remains a priority.

The importance of the shellfish industry to Washington and Mason County is underscored by the Washington Shellfish Initiative, an innovative partnership among all levels of government, tribes, the shellfish industry, and nonprofit organizations to promote clean water commerce, create family-wage jobs and education the public about the role shellfish play in keeping our marine waters healthy.

Mineral Resource Lands

The State of Washington's GMA guidelines define mineral resource lands as lands primarily devoted to the extraction of minerals, or that have known or potential long term significance for the extraction of minerals. Minerals include gravel, sand, and valuable metallic substances.

See Mason County's Planning Map Library on the County Website for a series of maps referenced in the Comprehensive Plan including a Mineral Resources Map showing the location of known and potential mineral resources. The mineral resources identified on the map are based primarily on soil types identified in the *Mason County Soil Survey* and the Department of Ecology in the *Coastal Zone Atlas of Washington*. It should be noted that many of the soil characteristics which increase an area's potential as a source of mineral resources also increase its potential for aquifer recharge.

Mason County has a substantial supply of construction aggregate (i.e., sand and gravel). There are three remaining, undeveloped, large sources of high-quality sand and gravel located in close proximity to the waters of Puget Sound, such that materials can be transported from the site by barge to water-dependent metropolitan construction aggregate markets also located on the Puget Sound tide lands. Two of these large deposits of aggregate are located in Mason County. They include the proposed Hamma Hamma site at Eldon on Hood Canal, and the permitted Johns Prairie site north of Shelton on Oakland Bay.

Both Mason County sites contain a high-volume source of high-quality sand and gravel. These resources are suitable for processing into a wide variety of finished construction aggregate classes, all meeting government and ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials) specifications.

Mason County has 19 operating surface mines at the present time, approximately 2,200 acres considered as active permitted mines according to the Department of Natural Resources. The Resource Ordinance protects mineral resources lands for the future use of these areas for mineral resource extraction.

Continued population growth may place additional demands on local mineral resources. Impacts associated with mineral extraction include erosion and sedimentation, noise from machinery and vehicles, fugitive dust, and the visual impacts of excavated areas.