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Kittitas County
WASHINGTON

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



[Insert adoption date]



Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACS	American Community Survey	HSIP	Highway Safety Improvement Plan
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act	HUD	Housing and Urban Development
ADU	Accessory Dwelling Unit	HVAC	Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning
ATV	All-Terrain Vehicle	KCC	Kittitas County Code
AV	Assessed Value	KCCD	Kittitas County Conservation
BOCC	Board of County Commissioners	LAMIRD	District
CAO	Critical Areas Ordinance	LCA	Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Development
CAP	Climate Action Plan	LOS	Land Capacity Analysis
CDP	Census Designated Places	LOSS	Level of Service
CEJST	Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool	MBR	Large On-site Sewer Systems
CFP	Capital Facilities Plan	mph	Membrane Bioreactor
CIP	Capital Improvement Program	MPR	Miles per Hour
CWPP	Community Wildfire Protection Plan	ORV	Master Planned Resort
CWU	Central Washington University	PAA	Office of Financial Management
DAHP	Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation	PM	Off-Road Vehicle
DNR	Department of Natural Resources	PMS	Potential Annexation Area
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency	PPP	Particulate Matter
ESHB	Engrossed Substitute House Bill	PROS	Pavement Management System
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration	PTCS	Public Participation Plan
FAR	Federal Aviation Regulation	PUD	Parks, Recreation, and Open Space
FCC	Federal Communications Commission	QuadCo RTPO	Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency	RCW	Planned Unit Developments
FERC	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission	RV	Quad County Regional Transportation Planning Organization
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration	SBA	Revised Code of Washington
FMR	Fair Market Rents	SEPA	Recreational Vehicle
GIS	Geographic Information System	SMP	Small Business Administration
GMA	Growth Management Act	SPPF	State Environmental Policy Act
HAMFI	HUD Area Median Family Income	SWOT	Shoreline Master Program
HMP	Hazard Mitigation Plan	TBD	Solar Power Production Facility
HNA	Housing Needs Assessment		Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
			Transportation Benefit District



TDR	Transfer of Development Rights	WRIA	Water Resource Inventory Area
TIP	Transportation Improvement Plan	WSAC	Washington State Association of Counties
UGA	Urban Growth Area	WSDA	Washington State Department of Agriculture
US	United States	WSDOT	Washington State Department of Transportation
USDA	US Department of Agriculture	WUI	Wildland-Urban Interface
USFS	US Forest Service	WUTC	Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission
VSP	Voluntary Stewardship Program	YTAHP	Yakima Tributary Access & Habitat Program
WAC	Washington Administrative Code		
WAHCAP	Washington Habitat Connectivity Action Plan		
WDFW	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife		



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Growth Management Act

Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 36.70A.020 sets out the planning goals that must guide the development and adoption of comprehensive plans and development regulations for counties and cities in Washington State that plan under the Growth Management Act (GMA). These goals are not listed in order of priority and are intended to shape both local and regional planning efforts.

Urban growth	<i>Focus new development in urban areas with adequate services.</i>
Reduce sprawl	<i>Prevent low-density, sprawling development on undeveloped land.</i>
Transportation	<i>Support efficient, multimodal transportation that reduces emissions and is regionally coordinated.</i>
Housing	<i>Plan for affordable, diverse housing options for all income levels.</i>
Economic development	<i>Promote economic growth and opportunity consistent with local plans.</i>
Property rights	<i>Protect private property and ensure private property is not taken for public use.</i>
Permits	<i>Process development permits fairly and predictably.</i>
Natural resource industries	<i>Support and conserve resource-based industries and lands.</i>
Open space and recreation	<i>Preserve open space, enhance recreation, and protect habitat.</i>
Environment	<i>Safeguard air, water, and environmental quality.</i>
Citizen participation	<i>Involve the public and coordinate among jurisdictions.</i>
Public facilities/services	<i>Ensure adequate facilities and services for new development.</i>



Historic preservation	<i>Identify and protect historic and archaeological sites.</i>
Climate change/resiliency:	<i>Adapt to and mitigate climate impacts; advance environmental justice.</i>
Shorelines	<i>Integrate shoreline management goals into local planning.</i>

1.2 Statewide Plans

The Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan is designed to align with local long-range plans—such as the Public Works Transportation Plan and Capital Improvement Plan—as well as applicable statewide plans, including Washington Department of Transportation's (WSDOT's) Active Transportation, Freight, Highway System, and Aviation plans. This alignment ensures County policies and projects complement broader state goals for mobility, safety, and infrastructure through coordinated planning and regular updates.

1.3 Countywide Planning Policies

The County last updated the Countywide Planning Policies in 2016 under Ordinance 2016-013. Countywide planning policies set the overall framework and direction for land use, housing, transportation, and other major planning topics within a county. Each city and the county itself must develop their comprehensive plans to be consistent with these countywide policies, meaning the goals, policies, and land use decisions in the comprehensive plan must align with the shared regional vision and standards established at the county level. This consistency ensures coordinated growth, efficient infrastructure, and compatible development across jurisdictions within the county.

1.4 Regional Consistency

The Quad County Regional Transportation Planning Organization's Regional Transportation Plan and the Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan must be consistent with each other to meet state requirements under the Growth Management Act. This means that transportation policies, priorities, and projects outlined in the County's plan are coordinated with those in the regional plan, ensuring that local and regional transportation systems work together efficiently. Consistency is achieved through policy review, joint planning, and regular updates, so that both plans support shared goals for mobility, infrastructure, and growth across the region.

1.5 Document Organization

Each Element of the Comprehensive Plan begins with an introduction that explains the context of the Growth Management Act and references relevant state and regional plans. It then provides an overview of existing conditions and trends, establishing a foundation for understanding current challenges and opportunities. Building on this, the Element outlines goals and policies that guide future growth and development within the specific topic area, ensuring consistency with statutory requirements and



regional objectives. In some cases, the introduction, conditions and trends, and goals are organized by land use to better address the unique challenges across different areas of the county. The appendices of the Comprehensive Plan serve as a repository for supporting materials, including reports, data analyses, public engagement summaries, and other supplemental information. These resources provide valuable documentation for future updates and help maintain transparency in the planning process. However, the most important information from the appendices has been summarized within the appropriate Element to understand the goals and policies.

1.6 Supporting Documents

The Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan is supported by long-range departmental plans to ensure coordinated growth under the Growth Management Act. This integration means land use, transportation, and capital projects work together through joint planning and regular updates, supporting shared goals for infrastructure and community development.

Transportation

20-Year Transportation Plan

Six-Year Transportation Capital Improvement Plan

Kittitas County ADA Transition Plan

2022 10-Year Transportation Asset Management Plan

Road Safety Improvement Plan

Economic Development

2023 Kittitas County Economic Strategic Plan

2025 Kittitas County Tourism Strategic Plan

Environment

2021 Shoreline Master Program

Climate and Resiliency

2025 Kittitas County Hazard Mitigation Plan

Capital Facilities

Six-Year Capital Improvement Plan

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

2025 Kittitas County Tourism Strategic Plan

2021 Kittitas County Recreation and Tourism Plan

Kittitas County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan (PROS)

2016 Kittitas County Tourism Infrastructure Plan



1.7 Public Engagement and Involvement

The periodic update of the Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan was developed in close partnership with the community, guided by a robust Public Participation Plan (PPP) designed to ensure meaningful opportunities for input throughout the planning process, as required under the Growth Management Act¹.

1.7.1 Public Participation Plan

A Public Participation Plan completed in 2025 established the direction for the drafting of the Comprehensive Plan, with strategic actions to guide outreach and engagement, including the following:

- **Encouraging continuous and inclusive participation:** The plan aimed to involve a diverse cross-section of the community, with special attention to underrepresented groups.
- **Building trust and transparency:** Open and honest communication about goals, processes, and outcomes was prioritized.
- **Educating and informing the community:** Multiple channels were used to ensure residents understood the issues, plans, and opportunities for involvement.
- **Addressing community needs and priorities:** Engagement activities were structured to identify and prioritize the actual needs and interests of the community.
- **Strengthening community relationships:** The plan fostered connections among residents, organizations, and institutions.

The key strategies to reach the community included:

Engagement Strategy	Details
A dedicated project website for updates, events, and materials.	The project website provided important documents and materials to the public, advertised engagement opportunities, and notified the public of the project timeline between March 2025 to June 2026.
Pop-up events at existing community gatherings.	The County attended farmers markets, football games, parades, school board, fire districts, and community meetings between March 2025 to June 2026.
Youth engagement and activities.	The County attended the Bite of the Burg in September 2025, largely attended by college students at Central Washington University.

¹ RCW 36.70A.140 Comprehensive plans—Ensure public participation.



Engagement Strategy	Details
Online surveys to gather broad and specific feedback.	One online survey was distributed to the community between May to June 2025.
Stakeholder interviews , with special focus on natural resources, agriculture and ranching, resilience, and housing.	Stakeholder interviews were completed during preliminary drafting of policies in October 2025.
A series of open houses across the county.	Open houses were completed in May 2025.
Regular updates and public workshops with the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners.	Updates were held at regularly scheduled meetings through September 2025 to June 2026.

See **Appendix K** for the complete public participation plan document.

1.7.2 Public Participation Results

Over 350 individuals participated in engagement activities, representing a wide range of ages, backgrounds, and geographic areas within the county. See **Appendix L** for the complete Public Participation Results report.

Key themes from engagement:

Community values: Access to outdoor recreation, the natural environment, rural, and small-town lifestyle were most valued by residents.

Priorities for growth: Supporting recreation, protecting natural resource lands, mitigating natural hazards (wildfire, drought, flooding), improving infrastructure, and expanding affordable housing.

Housing: Emphasis on affordability, diversity of housing types, and protection of rural lands.

Environment: Strong support for conservation, water quality, and climate change mitigation.

Economic development: Recreation, farming, education, and forestry were seen as vital industries.

Community services: Hospitals, schools, parks, and support for vulnerable populations were prioritized.

Hazards: Wildfire, drought, and reduced snowpack were top concerns.

Vision for the future: Residents expressed a desire for balanced development that preserves recreational opportunities and the natural environment while enhancing quality of life.



1.7.3 Stakeholder Participation

Kittitas County sought to engage in a wide range of stakeholders to understand the interconnected community and unique conditions present in 2026.

Property Owners and Residents

Environmental Organizations

Builders and Developers

Kittitas Audubon, Kittitas Conservation

Central Washington Homebuilders

Trust, Mountain to Greenway Trust

Association

Local Governments

Water Providers

Cities of Roslyn, Cle Elum, Kittitas, Ellensburg, South Cle Elum; Towns and Census Designated Places (CDPs)

School Districts and Central Washington University

State and Regional Agencies

HopeSource Nonprofit

Washington Departments of Commerce, Ecology, Fish & Wildlife, Natural Resources, Transportation, State Parks & Recreation

Agricultural Groups

Kittitas County Farm Bureau, Orchardists, Cattlemen's Association

1.7.4 Stakeholder Participation Insights

These stakeholder groups were intentionally invited because they represent key voices most affected by recent changes to state law on housing and climate resilience, and they provide a balance of public and private perspectives. This engagement was especially critical as the County introduced its first-ever Climate and Resiliency Element in the Comprehensive Plan. Because of the recent changes to state law and the larger concerns from the community, the feedback focused primarily on housing affordability and climate resilience.

Agriculture Insights

- Stakeholders expressed that water availability and security are the most significant long-term barriers, exacerbated by prolonged drought, reduced snowpack, and uncertainty around water rights.
- Urban sprawl and development often threatens farming and ranching viability, increase traffic conflicts, and strains infrastructure.
- The aging infrastructure (roads, bridges, culverts, power, etc.) is insufficient to support growth, agricultural operations, and heavier equipment.
- Stakeholders widely support agricultural clustering as a key tool to preserve farmland while allowing limited, strategic development.



- There is a growing recognition of water challenges across jurisdictions which has created momentum for coordinated action.
- There is strong support for the County Comprehensive Plan to be used as a key tool to build partnerships, coordinate solutions, and guide long-term agricultural and infrastructure planning.

Housing Insights

- Stakeholders expressed concerns about the lack of affordable and diverse housing options, particularly for aging populations and families.
- Development is often hindered by permitting delays and resource constraints within the community. Several participants suggested programs to reduce costs or streamline permitting processes for housing projects in appropriate areas to improve feasibility.
- There is strong community interest in balancing historic preservation and sustainability with new development.
- Barriers to housing include limited state resources, infrastructure gaps, rising energy costs, and insufficient grant-writing capacity.
- Stakeholders identified opportunities for interagency collaboration and renewable energy partnerships to support housing development.

Climate and Resilience Insights

- Climate hazards such as wildfire smoke and extreme heat have a direct impact on livability and affordability in the county.
- Engagement revealed a strong desire to balance growth with conservation, restore salmon and whitefish populations, and protect Tribal rights and water resources.
- Natural resource pressures include limited service capacity, increased wildfire risk, water rights complexity, and transportation congestion.
- High-priority concerns for future resiliency planning include housing expansion into wildfire-prone zones, floodplain management, agricultural land fragmentation, and limited electric vehicle infrastructure.
- Increased flooding raises concerns about the need to design and build larger culverts and bridges.
- Forest health has declined due to severe drought conditions, prompting interest in proactive emergency resources to prepare for climate-related disasters.
- Stakeholders noted successes such as previous flood improvements and strong community support for mitigation actions.



- Opportunities exist for climate education, improved grant-writing capacity, and integrating traditional knowledge with science when identifying adaptation strategies.

1.8 Amendments to County Plans, Codes, and Standards

The Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan, elements thereof, and Development Regulations shall be subject to continuing evaluation and review by the County. Any change to Development Regulations shall be consistent with, and implement, the Comprehensive Plan as adopted pursuant to RCW 36.70A.

Kittitas County shall broadly disseminate to the public the following program for public participation in amendments to the County Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations:

1. If, during project permit review, the County identifies deficiencies in County plans or regulations, the project permit review shall continue, and the identified deficiencies shall be docketed for possible future amendments. For purposes of this section, a deficiency in a Comprehensive Plan or Development Regulations refers to the absence of required or potentially desirable contents of a Comprehensive Plan or Development Regulations. It does not refer to whether a Development Regulation addresses a project's probable specific adverse impacts, which the permitting agency could mitigate in the normal project review process.
2. Any interested person, including applicants, citizens, County Commission and Board Members, and staff of other agencies may suggest Comprehensive Plan or Development Regulation amendments. The suggested amendments shall be docketed with the Community Development Services Department and considered by the Kittitas County Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) on at least an annual basis, consistent with the provision of RCW 36.70A.130 and the regulatory reform act Engrossed Substitute House Bill (ESHB) 1724.
3. Proposed amendments or revisions of the Comprehensive Plan are considered by the Board of County Commissioners no more frequently than once a year except that amendments may be considered more frequently under the following circumstances:
 - a. The initial adoption of a Subarea Plan; and
 - b. The adoption or amendment of a Shoreline Master Program (SMP) under the procedures set forth in RCW 90.58.
4. All proposals shall be considered by the County concurrently so that the cumulative effect of the various proposals can be ascertained. However, after appropriate public participation the County may adopt amendments or revisions to its Comprehensive Plan whenever an emergency exists or to resolve an appeal of a Comprehensive Plan filed with a growth management hearings board or with the court.
5. For purposes of this section, docketing refers to compiling and maintaining a list of suggested changes to the Comprehensive Plan or Development Regulations in the Community Development Services Department in a manner that will ensure such suggested changes will be considered by the County and will be readily available for review by the public. Docketing for the



calendar year shall be taken from January 1 to the first Friday of the month of April of each calendar year. Amendments docketed after the first Friday of the month of April shall be considered in the following calendar year.

6. Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan or Development Regulations docketed by the first Friday of the month of April shall be approved or denied by the Board of County Commissioners on or before December 31 of that same calendar year.
7. To facilitate public participation, the County shall maintain and provide for the following procedures when considering amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations:
 - a. **Broad dissemination of proposals and alternatives.** The docket shall be available for public review in the Community Development Services Department during regular business hours. Alternatives to a proposal may be submitted by any party prior to the closing of the written testimony portion of the public hearing before the Planning Commission.
 - b. **Opportunity for written comments.** Written testimony shall be allowed from the date of docketing up to the date of closing of the written testimony portion of the public hearing.
 - c. **Public Meetings.** Study sessions and hearings shall be held only after effective notice has been distributed.
 - d. **Provisions for open discussion.** Hearings shall allow for sufficient time allotments allowing all parties that wish to give oral or written testimony may do so.
 - e. **Communication programs and information services.** A newsletter that summarizes amendments docketed and projected meeting and hearing dates should be provided by the Community Development Services Department for distribution to all parties that have requested to receive it by mail. Copies of proposed amendments shall be available at cost of reproduction.
 - f. **Consideration of and response to public comments.** The Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners should review the testimony submitted in their findings.
 - g. **Notice of decision.** Publication in the paper of record of a notice that Kittitas County has adopted the Comprehensive Plan or Development Regulations or amendments thereto, and such publication shall state all petitions in relation to whether or not such actions are in compliance with the goals and requirements of this chapter, RCW 90.58, or RCW 43.21C and must be filed within 60 days after the publication date.
8. The County-Wide Planning Policies identify the Conference of Governments as the body that will allocate population projections based on criteria consistent with state law. Changes to the zoning map shall only be conducted in a manner consistent with process to changes with the land use map.



1.9 Vision Statement

Kittitas County is a region with a distinct sense of place based on the quality and diversity of our natural and built environment, valued recreational opportunities, respected rural working lands, unique regional character, and commitment to a high quality of life.

The County addresses challenges of future growth in a direct manner. Coordinated planning and suitable density patterns ensure that rural areas, natural areas, and working lands are sustained for the benefit of current and future generations. An important factor in the county's growth is fostering a diverse economy with a variety of employment opportunities achieved through a balance of commercial, industrial, and manufacturing areas located and sized to ensure opportunities for rural-based employment. The diverse housing needs of current and future residents are met by providing a range of housing types that ensure adequate and affordable housing options.

Kittitas County enhances its regional character by preserving the diversity of existing resource tourism and promoting future opportunities for expansion and establishment of new resource tourism opportunities. The County protects, conserves, and responsibly manages natural resources through education, coordination, facilitation, and long-term planning.

Kittitas County recognizes the growing importance of outdoor recreation as a vital contributor to community well-being, economic resilience, and stewardship of our natural landscapes. The County supports the development of a more formal recreation program that works in partnership with local, state, and federal land managers to enhance access, improve recreational infrastructure, and promote responsible enjoyment of public lands. By encouraging high-quality, sustainable recreation experiences, the County strengthens its rural economy through increased spending on local goods and services while ensuring that cherished natural areas are conserved for the benefit of present and future generations.

The cornerstone of the County's approach to planning is conducting activities in a manner that encourages citizen involvement, enhances public trust, and promotes mutual understanding.

This Comprehensive Plan is adopted by the County in compliance with the Washington State Growth Management Act, RCW 36.70A and under authority of the Planning Commission Act, RCW 35.63. This Comprehensive Plan is based on a framework of community goals and policies adopted by the County with the help of the various community groups, agencies, community partners and other citizens as a final expression of public policy.



2 LAND USE

2.1 Introduction

The Land Use Element plays the central role in guiding land use patterns and decisions for the County. In keeping with state law, the County fulfills its responsibility of shaping land use primarily through its Comprehensive Plan policies and implementing Development Regulations. While this chapter addresses all land uses in the county, the emphasis is on urban lands. Rural and resource land uses are specifically addressed in the Rural and Resource Lands Element (**Chapter 3**).

The majority of new growth in the county is encouraged to locate in established cities and urban growth areas (UGAs) where adequate public facilities and services can be provided in an efficient and economical manner. An adequate supply of land in the urban growth areas will ensure that immediate and future urban needs are met as well as provide for an orderly and efficient transition from low intensity land uses to urban land uses over time as the incorporated cities expand.

Current population data and population projections developed by the Washington Office of Financial Management (OFM) as recent as 2022 indicate that Kittitas County is meeting Growth Management Act mandates to provide an adequate land supply for urban growth areas to accommodate future growth and that no immediate changes in urban growth area boundaries are necessary. In addition to projections by OFM, an analysis completed on behalf of the County in 2025 has demonstrated that there are some significant growth trends. These growth trends are unique to the county, that should be monitored, for the immediate planning future and making sure that the projected growth is being adequately planned for and is meeting Growth Management Act mandates. See **Appendix F** for the Land Capacity Analysis completed for Kittitas County.

2.2 Conditions and Trends

2.2.1 Land Use Patterns

Kittitas County is located at the geographic center of Washington State, midway between the heavily populated Puget Sound region and the eastern farming areas centered around Moses Lake. More than half of the county is covered by coniferous forests, while approximately 30% is in pasture or unimproved grazing land. Less than 2% of the county is in urban development.

The county covers 1,481,814 acres (2,315 square miles) of highly varied terrain and climates. Beginning in the high Cascades, the land slopes generally to the east and south to the Columbia River.

Land use in Kittitas County ranges from residential uses to resource-based activities. In the Snoqualmie Pass area, resource allocation in the form of timber harvesting is the predominant land use with additional areas used for recreation. Resource lands still predominate the mid-elevations, though residential development increases in these areas. In the lower elevations, agricultural activities are the main land use, with residential development intermixed in the area. The Department of Defense's



Yakima Training Center is located in the southeastern portion of the county and makes up approximately 164,132 acres within the lower Kittitas Valley.

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2.2.2 Urban Growth Areas

Urban growth areas are intended to urbanize and become annexed in the next 20 years. Until that time, these lands will continue to be under County jurisdiction. To ensure both consistency and coordination with the future annexing jurisdiction, planning for these areas will be done in concert with the respective cities. In addition, interlocal agreements with the individual cities may be necessary to provide the necessary administrative guidance and services to these unincorporated areas.

As portions of the urban growth areas develop, it is assumed that these areas will be annexed to an adjacent city. Prior to annexation, intergovernmental agreements will need to be created to address the allocation of financial burdens that result from the transition of land from County to city jurisdiction. Similarly, agreements will need to be drafted to coordinate planning efforts for the unincorporated areas of the urban growth areas and with facility providers in the other areas throughout the county. The following are additional issues to be addressed by the cities and Kittitas County for the preparation and implementation of goals and policies contained in this Comprehensive Plan:

Joint interlocal agreements:²

1. Unified or consistent subdivision code;
2. Municipal utility extension agreement for water, sewer, and gas;
3. Intergovernmental service agreements for libraries, fire, emergency medical service, and parks and recreation;
4. Unified or consistent zoning code with provisions for urban zoning, transitional zoning, and other transitional uses;
5. Density and land use mapping;
6. Airport Facility flight safety zones, density, land uses, expansion of the airport, and services provided for the City of Ellensburg;
7. Extension and acquisition of rights-of-way;
8. Unified or consistent road standards, stormwater standards and level of service; Annexation agreements; and
9. Shoreline Master Program amendments.

The individual cities within Kittitas County are responsible for developing a final urban growth area boundary, future land use plans for the unincorporated portion of their respective urban growth areas, and facility or service needs to accommodate the 20-year population growth. These plans are to be submitted to Kittitas County for consideration and ultimately adoption as a portion of the County Comprehensive Plan.

² This list is not intended to be all inclusive.



RCW 36.70A.110(5) states, "Final urban growth areas shall be adopted at the time of comprehensive plan adoption under this chapter..." and RCW 36.70A.110(6) states, "Each county shall include designations of urban growth areas in its comprehensive plan."

Urban growth areas are identified for the cities of Ellensburg, Cle Elum, Roslyn, Kittitas, and the Town of South Cle Elum.

2.2.3 Kittitas County Airport (Bowers Field [ELN])

Kittitas County has an "Airport Zone", in which to protect its general aviation airport. Through its Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations, in compliance with RCW 36.70.547, or as amended thereafter, the County shall discourage the siting of incompatible uses adjacent to its general aviation airport.

The Kittitas County Airport (Bowers Field [ELN]), located North of Ellensburg, is the largest airport in the county and provides air transport from the Ellensburg area to other airports. Zoning revisions may be necessary from time to time to provide the protection needed for the continued safe operations of the airport. Such zoning proposals should be presented to the Planning Commission for recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners.

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2.2.4 Historical Lands

Historical lands include all those lands which have been designated as such on federal, state, or local historical registers as well as those sites which have a local cultural or historical significance.

2.2.5 Master Planned Resorts (MPR)

The MPR designation applies to those lands that comprise a self-contained and fully integrated Master Planned Resort. Master planned resorts are typically destination resort facilities consisting of short-term visitor accommodations associated with a range of developed on-site indoor or outdoor recreational facilities. A master planned resort may also include residential uses within its boundaries, but only if the residential uses are integrated into and support the on-site recreational nature of the resort. A master planned resort may constitute urban growth outside of urban areas as limited by these policies.

Kittitas County has a wide range of natural features including climate, vegetation, water, resources, scenic qualities, cultural, and geological features, which are desirable for a wide range of recreational users to enjoy. Master planned resorts offer an opportunity to utilize these special features for enjoyment and recreational use. Master planned resorts can bring significant economic diversification and benefits to communities, while at the same time enhancing environmental values. Master planned resorts can address these unique opportunities while maximizing retention of environmental features, critical habitats, resource lands, and other critical features. Master planned resorts can be located and planned in ways that do not detrimentally affect projected growth scenarios in urban growth areas and limited areas of more intensive rural development. Master planned resorts should be designed to stand alone, by not requiring adjacent areas to develop land uses to support the resort use. Recognizing these



factors, policies guiding the location and development of master planned resorts must consider varied and unique criteria.

Master planned resorts may be approved in the County in accordance with: (1) RCW 36.70A.360 or .362 Master planned resorts, as amended; (2) County Comprehensive Plan policies; and (3) County Development Regulations. For general guidance purposes, the County Master Planned Resort Policies rely upon the June 1994 “Master Planned Resorts Draft Comprehensive Plan Policy Guidance” prepared by the Washington State Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development Task Force.

2.2.6 Subarea Plans

Kittitas County has three adopted Subarea Plans.

Snoqualmie Pass Comprehensive Plan

The Snoqualmie Pass Subarea Comprehensive Plan has been adopted into the Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan. The complete Subarea Plan can be found in **Appendix B**.

Suncadia Resort Subarea Plan

The Suncadia Planned Resort Subarea Plan establishes a framework for a self-contained, destination-oriented resort within a defined boundary, featuring short-term accommodations and a variety of recreational facilities in a natural setting. Development within the subarea must comply with County-adopted policies, development regulations, approved permits, and agreements under RCW 36.70A.360, ensuring adequate services and facilities through the Conceptual Master Plan. Land uses are regulated by these agreements and state law, while municipal services may be extended to the resort under specific conditions. Policies emphasize wildfire protection, reducing sprawl, and permitting certain temporary industrial uses tied to resort development, all while maintaining alignment with countywide planning goals and comprehensive plan requirements. The complete Subarea Plan can be found in **Appendix C**.

Easton Subarea Plan

The Easton Subarea Plan is a 20-year actionable roadmap designed to guide growth, land use, housing, economic development, community services, resiliency, and safety for the Easton community in western Kittitas County. Rooted in the County’s Comprehensive Plan and aligned with the Growth Management Act, the plan focuses on preserving Easton’s rural character, natural landscapes, and outdoor recreation opportunities while supporting small-scale business and housing options. The complete Subarea Plan can be found in **Appendix D**.

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2.2.7 Private Property and Water Rights

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Property Rights

Kittitas County recognizes private property rights and as such includes reference to Ordinance No. 96-09, an ordinance enabling a private property taking impact analysis within the county. In addition, Kittitas County recognizes the importance of agriculture and has addressed appropriate protection mechanisms through those policies contained in Kittitas County Code (KCC) Section 17.74, Right to Farm for the Protection of Agricultural Activities.

Water Rights

Water rights are property rights held by individual citizens, irrigation entities, municipalities, public and private utilities, and governments. Water rights are recognized by RCW 90.03.010 Surface Waters and RCW 90.44.035 Ground Waters.

Kittitas County does, under its authority from the Growth Management Act, have a duty and the authority to protect ground and surface water quantity and quality.

To fulfill the duty of the County under the Settlement Agreement and the Growth Management Act, Kittitas County implemented the Permanent Measures in KCC Chapter 13.35.027 on December 2, 2015 requiring all new uses of groundwater to be mitigated and metered within the Yakima River drainage (Water Resource Inventory Area [WRIA]) 39.

Kittitas County operates a water banking and metering program in the Yakima River Basin to provide rural domestic water mitigation to new groundwater uses to offset local impacts as well as the Total Water Supply Available in the Yakima River, as measured at the Parker gauge. Water use is metered, monitored, and reported to the Washington State Department of Ecology annually.

Kittitas County offers two mitigation packages in the Green and Yellow zones of the Kittitas County Water Bank service area. The package available to each customer will be determined by the parcel's irrigation availability. Package A, only available to customers with access to other outdoor irrigation, will offer 275 gallons per day indoor domestic use only and Package B, only available to customers without access to outdoor irrigation, will offer 275 gallons per day indoor domestic only with 25 gallons per day for outdoor use up to 500 square feet. The packages offered through the Kittitas County Water Bank were determined by a Citizen's Advisory Committee and adopted by the Board of County Commissioners. Yellow zone suitability is contingent on review and approval by the Washington State Department of Ecology. The County continues to seek and acquire additional water holdings throughout the county and expand its service areas.

Kittitas County has acquired enough senior water rights, suitable for mitigating new domestic uses, to meet the development projections in the county for over 20 years within the Kittitas County Water Bank service area. This number was conservatively calculated assuming only Package B mitigation certificates would be issued, although the trend is more of a 60/40 split, with Package A being more prevalent.



Private water banks have overlapping and additional service areas within the county that offer mitigation that is not calculated in the 20-year development projection.

Kittitas County's water portfolio also includes 800 acre-feet of consumptive use water to mitigate historic domestic ground water uses established before May 15, 2014 within Yakima River Basin of the county.

The County does not require mitigation or metering for exempt well uses within the Columbia River Basin (WRIA 40).

2.2.8 Zoning and Land Use Designations

Table 2-1 shows the land use designations assigned in this Comprehensive Plan, along with the corresponding zone classifications present in each land use designation and the total area in acres occupied by that zone.

Table 2-1: Land Use Designations and Corresponding Zoning Classifications with Acreage

Type of Land Use	Land Use	Use Intensity	Description	Zoning	Acres
Resource Lands	Commercial Agriculture	Resource Lands	Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance	Commercial Agriculture	289,550.8
	Commercial Forest	Resource Lands	Forest Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance	Commercial Forest	800,316.7
	Mineral Lands	Resource Lands	Mineral Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance	Agriculture 20, Commercial Agriculture, Commercial Forest, Forest and Range, General Industrial, and Rural 5	5,690.2
Section Total: 1,095,557.7					
Rural	Rural Residential	Moderate	Residential opportunities with rural character outside of UGAs and limited areas of more intensive rural development (LAMIRDs)	Agriculture 5	12,110.3
				Rural 5	18,029.8
				Planned Unit Development	42.1
	Rural Working	Low	Supports Ag, Timber, and Mineral uses not in resource lands	Agriculture 20	111,022.0
				Forest and Range	217,500.5
				Planned Unit Development	503.1
	Rural Recreation	Moderate	Activities to support and enhance recreational opportunities	Master Planned Resort	6,458.4
				General Commercial	22.0
				Rural Recreation	3,789.5



Type of Land Use	Land Use	Use Intensity	Description	Zoning	Acres			
LAMIRDs	More Intense	Non-incorporated urban-like development		Planned Unit Development	363.8			
				Residential	417.0			
				Residential 2	41.8			
				Agriculture 3	43.3			
				Agriculture 20	0.0			
				Rural 3	0.0			
				Rural 5	53.5			
				Limited Commercial	13.7			
				General Commercial	195.9			
				Highway Commercial	45.3			
				Light Industrial	31.0			
				General Industrial	4.7			
				Forest and Range	75.8			
				Planned Unit Development	218.0			
Section Total: 370,950.2								
Urban	Urban	Intense	Incorporated Cities and their UGAs	Residential	86.4			
				Urban Residential	1,977.4			
				Agriculture 3	81.2			
				Rural 3	423.5			
				Rural 5	10.0			
				Limited Commercial	3.8			
				General Commercial	27.6			
				Highway Commercial	83.6			
				Light Industrial	1,625.7			
				General Industrial	597.4			
				Forest and Range	639.8			
				Planned Unit Development	88.8			
				Historic Trailer Court	24.2			
				Incorporated City	9,690.4			
Section Total: 15,359.8								
County Total: 1,481,867.7								

¹ Acreages are approximate.

² Mineral lands include lands zoned Commercial Agriculture, Commercial Forest, Agriculture 20, or Forest & Range. The totals in this table are subject to change based on improved accuracy of Geographic Information System (GIS) shapefiles and assessor's information.



2.2.9 Nonconforming Lots

Nonconforming lots are lots that do not meet the County's current zoning standards, present a challenge to the County's plans to preserve the rural character of the county outside urban growth areas. One of the most common nonconformities in the county is 3-acre rural lots.

Some of these are legally created lots that were created prior to the existence of subdivision rules, through previous zoning and subdivision standards that allowed smaller lots, and through a process known as "administrative segregation" that no longer exists in Kittitas County.

Legally created nonconforming lots pose a unique obstacle for development in Kittitas County. Some may have unique conditions that create a barrier to development. These often need to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, it is difficult to determine the full development potential of these lots in rural areas.

Over time, the County may consider inclusion of those nonconforming lots most capable of future development for inclusion as sending areas in a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program or a similar incentive program.

2.2.10 Allowed Zoning Densities

The Growth Management Act mandates that cities and counties focus growth toward population centers, i.e., cities and urban growth areas, to ensure that growth is both environmentally and economically sustainable over time. While there are several approaches to facilitate urban growth, a key approach is to ensure that growth is targeted to populated areas through zoning. While cities are required by the Growth Management Act to ensure that they have enough urban density zoning to accommodate future growth, counties are required to demonstrate that they have adequate *Rural* zoning.

In the unincorporated urban growth areas of Kittitas County, zoning such as Residential, Residential 2, and Urban Residential, densities allow up to six dwelling units per acre. In the rural areas in Kittitas County outside of urban growth area boundaries, allowed densities range from one dwelling unit per five* acres to one dwelling unit per 80 acres. (**The Agriculture-3 zone in rural areas allows for one dwelling unit per three acres but has no remaining developable area.*)

2.2.11 Population and Projected Growth

Meaningful planning for the County's future growth depends on reliable data for existing and projected population. The County has reviewed historical growth trends and coordinated with the cities on the appropriate allocation of growth between the cities and counties. This data is then used in planning for future residents and the protection of resources and rural lands found in the unincorporated areas of the county.

The Growth Management Act standard for Comprehensive Plan updates is to ensure that the county's urban growth areas are sized to efficiently and adequately accommodate growth based on a 20-year planning horizon. This Comprehensive Plan assumes a growth rate and population projection that is



based on the Washington OFM projections. Using the OFM projections, the County adopted its countywide growth and allocation for its cities on April 15, 2025, via County Resolution 2025-078, as shown in **Table 2-2**.

Table 2-2: 2046 County Population Growth and Allocations

Jurisdiction	2020 Population	2046 Population Growth	2046 Population
Cle Elum	2,157	848	3,005
Ellensburg	20,797	4,834	25,631
Kittitas	1,438	536	1,974
Roslyn	950	445	1,395
South Cle Elum	559	209	768
Unincorporated Kittitas County	20,567	7,280	27,847
Kittitas County Total Population	46,468	14,153	60,621

Source: Office of Financial Management 2025

For planning purposes, the county population allocations are based upon the medium OFM projection.

2.2.12 UGA Designations

Table 2-3 shows the size of each urban growth area boundary in Kittitas County.

Table 2-3: UGA Acreage in Kittitas County

UGA	Acres
Cle Elum	796
Ellensburg	4,413
Kittitas	375
Roslyn	17
South Cle Elum	351
TOTAL	5,577

Source: Approximate acreages per Kittitas County GIS 2025



Based on the adopted population growth projections, approximately 1,734 housing units in the unincorporated county are needed to accommodate future population. **Table 2-4** breaks down the housing unit allocation by unincorporated urban growth area and unincorporated rural county area.

Table 2-4: Housing Unit Allocation

Study Area	Allocation
Cle Elum	6
Ellensburg	293
Kittitas	6
Roslyn	0
South Cle Elum	6
Unincorporated Rural	1,423
TOTAL	1,734

2.2.13 Natural Environment

Introduction

Kittitas County is blessed with an abundance of natural environments, ranging from shorelines and wetlands to shrub steppe habitat and important migration routes. Natural features, such as floodplains or steep slope areas that are susceptible to landslides or erosion, also are considered as significant natural environments that are important to protect as Kittitas County develops in the future.

Kittitas County protects its natural environments through a variety of plans and tools, ranging from an ongoing effort to document and map critical areas to the adoption of plans such as the County's Shoreline Master Program and Critical Area Ordinance (CAO), both of which are incorporated by reference into this Comprehensive Plan.

Shorelines

The 2021 Kittitas County Shoreline Master Program goals and policies are adopted by reference into this Comprehensive Plan.

Shoreline Master Program

A central planning and regulatory tool for the protection of shorelines is the County's Shoreline Master Program. The Shoreline Master Program implements the statewide Shoreline Management Act of 1971, Chapter 90.58 RCW.

Every city and county in the state is required to have a local Shoreline Master Program to regulate development within 200 feet of all designated shorelines. The shorelines that are regulated under the Shoreline Master Program are those streams that have an annual mean flow greater than 20 cubic feet per second and lakes larger than 20 acres. Streams and waterbodies that do not meet the threshold for



regulation under the Shoreline Master Program usually are protected under the County's Critical Area Ordinance.

Critical Areas Ordinance

All counties planning under the state's Growth Management Act, Chapter RCW 36.70A, are required to have an adopted Critical Area Ordinance. Kittitas County Code Title 17A, Critical Areas, contains development regulations which were adopted to implement these policies. The Critical Area Ordinance regulates the following critical areas:

- Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas
- Fish and Wildlife Conservation Areas
- Frequently Flooded Areas
- Geologically Hazardous Areas
- Wetlands

In July 2025, Kittitas County Board of County Commissioners adopted Ordinance 2025-006, the most recent Critical Areas Ordinance update, following best available science and other applicable requirements in the Growth Management Act.

Voluntary Stewardship Program

Established in 2011, the Washington State Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) provides an alternative approach for counties to address the Growth Management Act's requirements for agricultural activities. Existing agricultural enterprises are regulated by the standards and policies established in the Kittitas County Voluntary Stewardship Program, as developed and administered by the Kittitas County Conservation District. Those agricultural areas participating in the Voluntary Stewardship Program are exempt from the County's Critical Area Ordinance. The Natural Environment Goals and Policies enumerated in this Comprehensive Plan do not apply to those lands that participate in the Voluntary Stewardship Program. Those lands participating in the Voluntary Stewardship Program will be subject to the stewardship goals and policies enumerated in the Voluntary Stewardship Program. The Voluntary Stewardship Program just completed the biennial report 2023 to 2025, find a copy of the document and more information on the Kittitas County Conservation District website.

2.3 Goals and Policies

The foundation of the Comprehensive Plan consists of the major goals and policies established by the County during the planning process. It is upon these goals and policies that virtually the entire Plan is based.

The planning process is an on-going process consisting of establishing, applying, monitoring, and evaluating goals and policies. Different goals may at times conflict, requiring the County to weigh one goal against the other in order to choose a policy direction.



Citizen participation has been a vital part of the planning process and has guided the formation of goals and policies. The following general goals and policies in this Element and elsewhere in the Comprehensive Plan have been drawn from that process.

Each goal and policy has been assigned a unique identifier that indicates the Element where it is located, specifies whether it is a goal or a policy, and includes a sequential number for organization. For example:

LU-G1 = Land Use Element, Goal 1

LU-P1 = Land Use Element, Policy 1

2.3.1 Urban Growth Areas

LU-G1: Maintain large-scale, high intensity land uses in urban growth areas to accommodate housing and employment for the next 20-years.

LU-P1: Urban growth areas shall be consistent with the following criteria:

- Each urban growth area shall provide sufficient urban land to accommodate future population/employment projections through the designated planning period;
- Lands included within urban growth areas shall either be already characterized by urban growth or directly adjacent to such lands;
- Existing urban land uses and densities should be included within urban growth areas;
- Urban growth areas shall provide a balance of industrial, commercial, and residential lands;
- Each urban growth area shall have the anticipated financial capability to provide infrastructure/services needed in the areas over the planning period under adopted concurrency standards;
- Protect natural resource lands and critical areas;
- Encourage the conversion of undeveloped lands into urban densities (infill);
- Provide for the efficient provision of public services;
- Promote a variety of residential densities; and
- Include sufficient vacant and buildable land.

LU-P2: Concentrate urban growth and development to areas where public roads and services can support such growth.

LU-P3: Reduce the conversion of land for development and concentrate future growth in urban growth areas.

LU-P4: Promote areas where compatible mixed commercial and industrial uses can be sited.



- LU-P5: Pursue consistency in Development Regulations in urban growth areas with adjacent cities. This may be accomplished through Potential Annexation Areas (PAAs), coordination through the Conference of Governments, development of interlocal agreements, and use of overlay zones such as Rural Transition Zones.
- LU-P6: Expansion of an urban growth area shall be characterized by urban development, consider patterns of development, and be supported by population forecasts and land capacity analysis.
- LU-P7: Any urban growth area expansion should preserve rural areas.
- LU-P8: Promote infill development of vacant or under-utilized properties.
- LU-P9: The County shall seek consistency in Development Regulations in urban growth areas with adjacent cities and, when appropriate, where rural development may impact future urban growth. This may be accomplished through coordination through the Conference of Governments and development of interlocal agreements.
- LU-P10: Expansion of the urban growth area shall be encouraged in areas not impacted by critical areas.
- LU-P11: Encourage and accommodate future expansion of utilities and roadways in a logical manner for new development in urban growth areas. Expansion of utilities and roadways shall not be made exclusively to accommodate new development outside of urban growth areas.
- LU-P12: Lands designated agriculture, mineral resource, or forest lands of long-term significance shall not be used to expand an urban growth area.
- LU-G2: Identify areas adjacent to existing cities and unincorporated urban growth areas which may be most conducive to facilitating future urban growth. Implement incentives to keep these areas from developing with rural growth patterns which may not facilitate a transition to being included within an urban growth area.**
 - LU-P13: Limit identified areas to those with fewer critical areas and where infrastructure, such as public water, sewer, and new roads may be more easily provided.
 - LU-P14: Incentivize the use of planning measures such as shadow platting, cluster development, or Transfer of Development Rights to encourage growth which may better facilitate future inclusion into the urban growth area.
 - LU-P15: Ensure landowners understand that the identification as an area where urban growth may be facilitated in the future does not signify that the property will be included into the urban growth area in the future.



2.3.2 Sustainable Development

LU-G3: Promote green building and environmental stewardship through Development Regulations.

- LU-P16: Coordinate with the cities for consistent application of green initiatives and incentives through development regulations.
- LU-P17: Coordinate with cities or regional partners to apply for joint funding for green initiatives.
- LU-P18: Periodically review sustainable development or green initiatives that may be well suited for rural areas and update development regulations.
- LU-P19: Encourage future subarea planning efforts to more directly implement land use and economic development measures.

2.3.3 State and Federal Lands

LU-G4: Mitigate impacts of state and federal agencies purchasing land which removes opportunities for housing, jobs, and economic development within the county and impacts County finance.

- LU-P20: When future land purchases are being considered by state agencies, provide notification to ensure they are aware that state agencies are required to comply with the comprehensive plan and development regulations per RCW 36.70A.103. Notification should outline comprehensive plan goals, policies, and development regulations where property sales may impact compliance with adopted plans and policies.
- LU-P21: Consider developing a program to transfer density from properties owned by state and federal agencies to cities and unincorporated urban growth areas.
- LU-P22: Work through the Washington State Associations of Counties (WSAC) to identify measures which may be taken to mitigate land purchase impacts.

2.3.4 Industrial Land Use

LU-G5: Explore new opportunities for industrial uses that may support economic growth or job creation.

Plan capital facility and infrastructure investments to facilitate the development of lands designated for industrial uses.

- LU-P23: Industrial uses located adjacent to residential areas or along scenic routes should be situated so as to minimize impacts on those areas. These industrial uses should provide screening and other measures to achieve compatibility.



- LU-P24: Location of Industrial Land. The County should designate sufficient industrial land located in areas convenient to utilities, fire protection, and to major transportation facilities (air, rail, freeway). Industrial developments may be permitted beyond urban growth areas when zoning allows.
- LU-P25: "Major Industrial Developments" may be approved within Kittitas County as authorized by the general principles of RCW 36.70A.365 and RCW 36.70A.367.

2.3.5 Historical and Cultural Land Use

- LU-G6: Identify, protect, preserve, and restore sites that contain resources of cultural, archaeological, historic, educational, or scientific value or significance.**
- LU-P26: Historic and archeological features designated by the County and State or Federal agencies should be preserved and protected from any development.
- LU-P27: The County shall work with the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation and the Yakama Nation to protect historic lands and cultural resources in the county.
- LU-P28: The County shall support initiatives to improve public awareness of historic lands and cultural resources, for example, through interpretive exhibits, signage, or through formal designation on local, state, or federal registries. However, the County recognizes the need to keep the location of some historic sites from public knowledge, such as areas known to contain archeological remains, to avoid disturbance and damage.
- LU-P29: Minimize the risk of disturbing cultural, archaeological, and historic resources within Kittitas County.
- LU-P30: Prevent the destruction of or damage to any site having cultural, archaeological, historic, scientific, or educational value as identified by the appropriate authorities, including affected Native American Tribes and Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP).
- LU-P31: Consult with professional archaeologists, DAHP, and affected Native American Tribes, before permitting or otherwise approving the use of development of shoreline areas containing cultural, archaeological, or historic resources.
- LU-P32: Consult with professional archaeologists, DAHP, and affected Native American Tribes to establish procedures for salvaging cultural, archaeological, or historic resources, and/or for maintaining such resources in an undisturbed location.
- LU-P33: Make informed specific land use decisions based upon information provided by DAHP or Native American Tribes.



- LU-P34: Ensure the use of the best available information, technology, and techniques in identifying, protecting, preserving, and restoring cultural, archaeological, and historic resources.
- LU-P35: Consult with DAHP and affected Native American Tribes as appropriate in implementing the cultural, archaeological, and historic resources goals, policies, and regulations contained in a variety of Kittitas County codes.

2.3.6 Commercial Land Use

- LU-G7: Expand commercial opportunities in Kittitas County and prioritize opportunities to expand workforce and high-paying jobs.**
- LU-P36: Evaluate, monitor, and improve development standards to ensure compatibility between adjacent commercial and non-commercial uses through bulk, height, and scale standards.
- LU-P37: Work with cities and other partners to understand future market trends and proactively assess commercial and industrial land base needs to achieve identified economic goals.
- LU-P38: The County will act to preserve the viability and integrity of existing business districts within the incorporated and unincorporated county.
- LU-P39: Most comparison shopping (general merchandise, clothing, appliance, auto, sporting goods) should be located in or near existing business districts.
- LU-P40: Home occupations and cottage industries which result in accumulations of vehicles, appliances, or other materials should be regulated and required to provide sight screening from adjacent properties and roadways.
- LU-P41: Highways and roads should not be developed with new commercial sites without compelling reasons and supporting economic data. Expansion and full development of existing business districts is encouraged.
- LU-P42: Designate sufficient available land for specialized commercial uses that are by their nature compatible with residential, agricultural, recreational, and other general land use types.
- LU-P43: Promote large-scale commercial development within the urban growth areas by encouraging infrastructure improvements and new business recruitment.
- LU-P44: Promote small-scale commercial development outside of urban growth areas when compatible with adjacent land uses.
- LU-P45: Encourage an adequate inventory of developable property to accommodate the siting of new, and the expansion of existing, commercial uses.



LU-P46: Identify areas where mixed commercial and industrial uses can be sited if compatibility is evident.

2.3.7 Airports

LU-G8: Provide adequate space for airport operations and monitor the relationship between adjacent uses.

LU-P47: Encourage aviation-related land uses in the airport overlay zone(s), provided that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) airport design criteria are met.

LU-P48: The County shall maintain an Airport Layout Plan for the Kittitas County Airport (Bowers Field [ELN]) in conformance with the FAA. The area contained in Federal Aviation Regulation (FAR) Part 77 should be designated as the Airport Overlay Zone.

LU-P49: Consider aviation easements in the Airport Overlay Zone.

LU-P50: Notify all property owners within the Airport Overlay Zone of airport activities.

LU-P51: Continue to implement the following FAA safety zones within the Airport Overlay Zone to protect operations and reduce safety risks:

- (a) Inner Safety Zone
- (b) Inner Turning Zone
- (c) Outer Safety Zone
- (d) Sideline Zone
- (e) Traffic Pattern Zone

LU-P52: All aviation related land uses should be considered acceptable in the area designated as "industrial," provided that the FAA airport design criteria are met.

LU-P53: Promote economic development and employment opportunities for the Airport Industrial Zone and Bowers Field Overlay Zone and the Airport Master Plan.

LU-P54: Establish zoning standards which will ensure that the industrial uses will not impact airborne aircraft because of height structures, smoke, glare, lights which shine upward, and radio transmissions, nor any water impoundments or sanitary landfills which would create hazards from waterfowl to airborne aircraft.

LU-P55: Promote renewable energy developments and industries within the Bowers Field Overlay Zone.



2.3.8 Master Planned Resorts (MPRs)

LU-G9: Continue master planned resorts and prioritize their contribution to Kittitas County's outdoor recreation opportunities.

LU-P56: Any master planned resort shall be planned and designed to minimize impact upon the rural character of Kittitas County by examining the entire site or area and adjacent lands and communities and shall avoid significant negative impacts upon surrounding areas.

LU-P57: A master planned resort should maintain and enhance the physical environment. Planning for a master planned resort should be based on natural systems, constraints, and opportunities and not adversely affect surrounding lands. Design characteristics should consider the overall context of the master planned resort, maintaining a common character throughout the project, which blends with natural features onsite.

LU-P58: Natural and man-made on-site recreational facilities and opportunities shall be the central focus of a master planned resort.

LU-P59: Recreational facilities will be included with initial development phases of a master planned resort with accommodations and other development types following.

LU-P60: A master planned resort should have a primary focus on short-term visitor accommodations, including vacation and second homes. Other residential uses may be permitted within a master planned resort if such uses are integrated into and support the on-site recreational nature of the resort. Short-term visitor accommodations should constitute more than 50% of all resort accommodation units. Short-term visitor accommodations, such as hotel rooms, should be included with the first and initial phases of a master planned resort development.

LU-P61: An adequate supply of affordable employee housing within a master planned resort, or within a reasonable distance of a master planned resort, should be demonstrated. If this supply cannot be demonstrated, steps should be taken to mitigate the lack of affordable housing supply, so that an unreasonable burden is not placed on the affordable housing markets of surrounding communities. A master planned resort's ability to hire local residents should be taken into account in determining whether an "adequate supply" of affordable housing is available.

LU-P62: Public facilities, utilities, and services will be provided to master planned resorts within urban growth areas, so long as all costs associated with such extensions, capacity increases, and services are borne by the master planned resort. Such public facilities, utilities, and service providers may include the County, the cities and towns within the county, water and sewer districts, and owners of water systems.



- LU-P63: Master planned resort facilities, utilities, and services should be designed to accommodate only the projected needs of the resort users. Because a resort is fully occupied only occasionally, master planned resort facilities and utilities need not be designed to meet peak user occupancy demands and should rely in part on storage and other appropriate mechanisms and technology to meet peak demands.
- LU-P64: Construction of a master planned resort and all necessary on-site and off-site capital facilities and utilities infrastructure will be concurrent but may be provided in phases to meet the needs of development phases as constructed and utilized.
- LU-P65: All school district facility and service impacts shall be mitigated by the master planned resort on a fair and proportionate basis, and review and mitigation of impacts on affected school districts may take into consideration the relatively low student population typically generated by a master planned resort.
- LU-P66: Master planned resorts should have a thorough review process prior to being located or designated and such review process should be phased, consistent, specific, and timely.
- LU-P67: A variety of urban residential densities should be included in a master planned resort site design, providing efficient, compact residential land use. Residential uses may include single-family detached lots and multifamily and attached residential structures. Clustering of residential units in a manner that preserves open space is strongly encouraged. Overall, master planned resort density shall not exceed an average of one unit per acre. Non-urban residential densities are appropriate within a master planned resort if they promote and are linked to the on-site recreational features and value of the resort.
- LU-P68: A master planned resort application should include a clear and detailed mapped description of how the development phases of the master planned resort fit together. Estimated timelines for site development, building construction and all necessary public and private capital facilities, utilities, and services should be provided.
- LU-P69: A master planned resort should be physically and, for the most part, visually separated from the nearest developed area.
- LU-P70: A substantial physical buffer should be included in a master planned resort's internal site design, allowing adjacent lands to be separated from the master planned resort so that activities within the master planned resort create no significant increases in ambient noise, reductions in air quality, or visual alterations outside of the master planned resort. To the extent possible, natural features such as water bodies, vegetation cover, slopes, or existing man-made features should be utilized as the master planned resort's buffer. The actual width of a master planned resort's buffer should be evaluated to determine the appropriate separation from



adjacent lands. The term “substantial physical buffer” is intended to mean more than 100 feet between a master planned resort’s perimeter and adjacent lands.

- LU-P71: An application for a master planned resort, a sub-area plan for an existing resort, should include site plans depicting the locations and describing the attributes of all on-site and surrounding natural features, critical plant and animal habitats, and potentially hazardous areas. The plan should propose opportunities to integrate the site’s natural amenities with the proposed built amenities.
- LU-P72: Historic and archeological features are to be preserved. Serious consideration should be given to whether such features could be appropriately integrated into a master planned resort’s proposed features as valuable attributes.
- LU-P73: A design theme for a master planned resort may be appropriate but is not required. However, multiple discordant themes should be avoided.
- LU-P74: A master planned resort will include significant recreational areas and facilities on-site so that the use of off-site recreational areas and facilities by resort visitors and associated impacts are minimized.
- LU-P75: Retail and commercial services should be designed to serve only the users of the master planned resort and should be limited in scope and location to serve only as ancillary uses within the master planned resort.
- LU-P76: Retail and commercial services offered on-site by a master planned resort should not duplicate the full range of commercial services available in adjacent communities. Retail and commercial services offered on-site by a master planned resort should be designed to discourage use from outside of the master planned resort by locating such services well within the master planned resort site rather than on its perimeter.
- LU-P77: A full range of commercial services should only be provided within the urban growth areas of the surrounding region.
- LU-P78: Adequate security, fire suppression, and first aid facilities and services should be provided on-site, taking into account the emergency facilities and level of service available from the County Sheriff and local fire and emergency medical districts.
- LU-P79: Master planned resort community sewer, water, and stormwater facilities (including associated treatment facilities) will be provided on-site and should be limited to meeting the needs of the master planned resort.
- LU-P80: Impacts to public services should be fully reviewed and fair and proportionate mitigation provided by the master planned resort.



- LU-P81: County road standards should be followed for on-site and off-site roadways and access points; provided, however, that some flexibility with respect to on-site road design standards may be appropriate if the master planned resort's natural features and critical areas are to be maintained. Administrative variance procedures should be utilized for this purpose.
- LU-P82: At all times, master planned resort road standards will meet the minimum safety standards adopted by the County Fire Marshal.
- LU-P83: On-site roadway and access costs should be fully borne by the master planned resort, and off-site road impacts should be mitigated by the master planned resort in proportion to its demonstrated impacts, including secondary impacts.
- LU-P84: Traffic impacts of the master planned resort, on-site and between the master planned resort and nearby areas of interest, should be mitigated by appropriate measures, e.g., transit/shuttle services, pedestrian, and bicycle trails, etc.
- LU-P85: All external road connection points with the master planned resort should be determined through review agreements with affected agencies and local governments in the region.

2.3.9 Water and Private Property

LU-G10: Support the planning and coordination of water resources and water rights in urban and rural areas.

- LU-P86: Kittitas County will place a high priority in the Comprehensive Plan on the following state goal:

RCW 36.70A.020(6) Property Rights. Private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made. The property rights of landowners shall be protected from arbitrary and discriminatory actions.

- LU-P87: The County will continue to support development and implementation of the Yakima Basin Integrated Management Plan to support water supply for agricultural lands and domestic purposes.
- LU-P88: The County may place limitations on the establishment of new uses of groundwater based on the County's authority to protect ground and surface water.
- LU-P89: The County finds that new uses of groundwater that are not mitigated in the Yakima River drainage basin threaten to interfere with senior water rights and stream flows and create a public health and safety threat that warrants application of provisions set forth in Kittitas County Code to existing lots as allowed by RCW 58.17.170(3).



2.3.10 Natural Environment

General Critical Areas

NE-G1: Designate and protect the functions and values of critical areas consistent with Best Available Science.

- NE-P1: Give special consideration to conservation or protection measures necessary to preserve or enhance anadromous fisheries, including measures that protect habitat important for all life stages of anadromous fish.
- NE-P2: Use Best Available Science to regulate development in a manner that balances protection of property rights and human health and safety with protection of critical area functions and values.
- NE-P3: Develop regulations and performance standards to mitigate land use incompatibilities in and adjacent to critical areas and their buffers for new and expanded uses and structures.
- NE-P4: Use a preference-based system of mitigation sequencing that reduces impacts using approaches ranging from avoidance to replacement.
- NE-P5: Identify and map critical areas throughout the county and ensure that the information is accessible to and understandable by citizens.
- NE-P6: Evaluate opportunities to:
 - Use innovative land use management techniques to conserve and protect designated critical areas.
 - Use non-regulatory measures to protect and enhance critical areas (e.g. education).
 - Encourage restoration and enhancement of critical area functions and values through incentives (e.g., development flexibility).
 - Compensate property owners impacted by critical area regulations (e.g., modified taxation, value-added development flexibility).
- NE-P7: Develop incentives to promote agricultural and environmental stewardship, such as the Voluntary Stewardship Program, to protect critical areas in areas used for agricultural activities while maintaining and enhancing the viability of agriculture.
- NE-P8: The County shall coordinate its own programs, regulations, and mapping with public, Tribal, and private organizations to protect and, where feasible, enhance the functions and values of critical areas.



- NE-P9: Except as required by the Growth Management Act, the County shall develop performance standards and regulations that are complementary and not duplicative or more restrictive than other existing and applicable regulations (e.g., federal or state regulation).
- NE-P10: Critical Area Ordinance regulations should recognize that some minor activities in critical areas or their buffers may be exempt from critical area regulations due to their low likelihood of adverse impact.
- NE-P11: Support and encourage the purchase and dedication of lands by public or private organizations for critical area protection and apply Best Management Practices to said property.

Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas

NE-G2: Protect critical aquifer recharge areas.

- NE-P12: Designate and protect the functions and values of medium and high susceptibility critical aquifer recharge areas.
- NE-P13: Recognize that some aquifers have critical recharging effects on streams, lakes, and wetlands that provide critical fish and wildlife habitat and that protecting adequate recharge of such aquifers may benefit fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas.
- NE-P14: Develop performance standards and regulations for new activities and expanded uses likely to adversely impact water quality in aquifers.
- NE-P15: Identify and map critical aquifer recharge areas. Continue data collection and evaluation efforts to better understand the vulnerability of county critical aquifer recharge areas to contamination.

Frequently Flooded Areas

NE-G3: Support floodplain restoration to reduce flood hazards and promote water consideration on the landscape.

- NE-P16: Designate and protect, and where feasible, enhance the functions and values of frequently flooded areas.
- NE-P17: Prevent the loss of property and minimize public and private costs associated with repairing or preventing flood damage from development in frequently flooded areas.
- NE-P18: Maintain Kittitas County's eligibility under the National Flood Insurance program.



- NE-P19: New or expanded uses or structures shall avoid impacts that reduce the effective flood storage volume within frequently flooded areas. When impacts are unavoidable, such impacts should be mitigated with compensatory storage, when feasible.
- NE-P20: Evaluate opportunities to increase the reservoir capacity of the river system in a manner beneficial to flood control and public welfare.
- NE-P21: Support the Kittitas County Flood Control District to manage flood related issues and to implement projects that prevent or reduce damage during floods.
- NE-P22: Consider climate change, including extreme precipitation, increased winter streamflow, and other impacts, in floodplain management planning.
- NE-P23: Evaluate the use of nature-based adaptation strategies for addressing climate change impacts on water quality, streamflow volume, and riparian habitat, and work with partners to develop recommendations on how and where such tools can be incorporated strategically.

Groundwater

- NE-G4: **Implement and update as needed a Comprehensive Management Program for water resources.**
- NE-P24: Protect surface and groundwater resources.

Wildlife and Habitat

- NE-G5: **Promote efforts to connect habitat and open space on private lands and open space on public lands.**
- NE-P25: Designate and protect, and where feasible, enhance the functions and values of fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas.
- NE-P26: Evaluate opportunities to protect fish and wildlife habitats on a regional and site-specific scale, considering the following:
 - a) Habitat connectivity;
 - b) Habitat diversity;
 - c) Areas of high species diversity;
 - d) Unique and rare habitats; and
 - e) Winter range and migratory bird habitats of seasonal importance.
- NE-P27: Support actions that protect species from becoming listed as sensitive, threatened, or endangered.



Shoreline

NE-G6: Maintain a Shoreline Master Program that is consistent with the State Shoreline Management Act and which reflects Best Available Science.

Further goals, policies, and objectives are outlined in the Shoreline Master Program. Visit the Kittitas County website for the most recent version.

Geologic Hazards

NE-G7: Designate and protect the function and value of geologically hazardous areas.

NE-P28: Appropriate mitigation measures should be required to either avoid or rescue significant public health and safety risks that are posed by geologically hazardous areas.

NE-P29: Potential impacts and alternative mitigation measures to eliminate or minimize the impacts in geologically hazardous areas shall be documented during the review of development applications.

NE-P30: Restrict development in geologically hazardous areas, including areas which are subject to erosion, landslide, channel migration, avalanche, or subsidence.

NE-P31: Risk of erosion shall be considered during the review of development applications based on localized rainfall, soil type, slope, drainage, run-off, and other site factors.

NE-P32: Siting of structures on known individual mine hazard areas shall be avoided, and where it cannot be avoided, the danger of mine hazards should be adequately considered.

NE-P33: Identify and map geologically hazardous areas, including but not limited to erosion areas, landslide areas, seismic areas, channel migration zones, alluvial fan hazard areas, mine hazard areas, and volcanic hazards.

NE-P34: Continue data collection and evaluation efforts to better understand the risks of the county's geologically hazardous areas.

NE-P35: At such time there are volcanic or seismic hazards identified and mapped in the county, any application for development in or near that area must show its location in relation to the hazard area.

Wetlands

NE-G8: Designate and protect, and where feasible, enhance the functions and values of wetlands.

NE-P36: Wetlands shall be protected because they provide important functions such as assisting in the reduction of erosion, siltation, flooding, ground, and surface water pollution, and providing wildlife, plant, and fisheries habitats.



- NE-P37: Develop a regulatory program for wetlands protection that is both sufficiently flexible to allow reasonable use and enjoyment of private property and consistent with the requirements of the Growth Management Act.
- NE-P38: Encourage the implementation of wetlands enhancement strategies that will result in a gain of wetlands habitat in the long term.
- NE-P39: Wetland identification, delineation, categorization, and where appropriate, mitigation, shall rely on guidance from the Washington State Department of Ecology, the United States (US) Army Corps of Engineers, and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).



3 RURAL AND RESOURCE LANDS

3.1 Introduction

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

The Rural and Resource Lands Element of the Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan addresses unincorporated portion of the county outside of urban growth areas. The Land Use Element and the Rural and Resource Lands Element 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 Rural and Resource Lands Element 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 and policies 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 of urban growth areas and commercial agricultural, commercial forest, and mineral lands.

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

3.1.1 Rural and Resource Lands

Rural and Resource Land Use Designations

Four Rural land use designations have been identified within this Comprehensive Plan. The first, Rural Residential lands, are those which are adjacent or near identified urban growth areas or limited areas of more intensive rural developments and have an infill potential at similar residential density. 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.

Second, Rural Working lands, generally encourages 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 Comprehensive 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 Rural Development (LAMIRD). 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.

Three Resource land use designations have been identified within this Comprehensive Plan. Kittitas County has utilized the standards set forth in RCW 36.70A.170 to designate Resource lands, which may not currently be characterized by urban growth and must have long term commercial significance. In using these criteria, the County relied on the definitions found in RCW 36.70A.030 relative to Resource lands, and to designate these lands into three land uses: commercial agriculture, commercial forest, and mineral resource lands.

A large portion of Kittitas County contains forested lands. Of these lands, 800,317 acres have been designated as forest lands of long-term commercial significance and are classified under the "Commercial Forest" land use within the Comprehensive Plan. Approximately 289,551 acres of the County's designated agricultural land of long-term commercial significance are classified under the "Commercial Agriculture" land use within the Comprehensive Plan. Designated Mineral Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance are classified under the "Mineral Lands" land use, covering approximately 5,690 acres in six different Rural and Resource lands zones.

Goals and policies for Rural and Resource Lands can be found in **Chapter 3.3** of this Comprehensive Plan.

Yakima Training Center

This designation contains those lands within the boundaries of the Yakima Training Center, an area acquired by the Federal Government for military personnel training.

The US Department of Defense has developed a comprehensive Integrated Cultural and Natural Resource Management Plan which serves as the guidance document for the management of installation resources. Kittitas County recognizes this plan and the goal and policy statements that result from it. In the event any portion of the Yakima Training Center was to revert to another ownership, the County reserves the right to establish land use planning goals, policies, and designations prior to such transfer being effective.

Other Public Lands

As of the adoption of this periodic update, approximately 73% of Kittitas County is considered public lands managed by state and federal agencies. In addition to those lands owned by the US Department of Defense, there are also lands managed by the US Forest Service, US Bureau of Land Management, Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, etc.



3.2 Rural Conditions and Trends

3.2.1 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, 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 critical areas.

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). It is further determined by "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, 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).

"Rural character" in Kittitas County is predominantly a 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 as well as assorted economic activities and opportunities, small rural residential development, and recreational opportunities throughout the county. The interstate and state highway systems which traverse the length and width of the county introduce countless travelers and visitors to the county. The county's highways and byways provide access to opportunities and means to create and preserve agri-tourist activities. They also provide access to 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.

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 where they occur and are appropriate. 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.



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. This Comprehensive 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.

3.2.2 Liberty Historic District

The Liberty Historic District is a historic mining town recognized by the National Register of Historic Places. Development in this district is subject to the Historic District Overlay Zone.

Liberty Historic Land Use Issues and Concerns:

1. The Liberty Historic District is a nationally designated historic district in the county.
2. The surrounding forested lands around Liberty are important to the natural historic character of the town site, including the four privately owned parcels.
3. The designation of the Liberty townsite as a special historical suburban classification would require the development of a community water system.
4. Liberty has a small finite number of buildable lots.

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3.2.3 Rural Recreation

Substantial amounts of recreation lands in this county are owned by the public and private parties. These provide more than ample opportunities for water recreation, hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, trail riding, winter recreation, and wildlife viewing. In addition to publicly owned areas, many private businesses cater to the public in providing skiing, golfing, camping, and trail riding on private lands.

Rural Recreation in Kittitas County is also largely provided in the form of recreational residences, primarily in the upper western area of the county. These developments are often "second homes" for persons living in other parts of the state. These recreational residences are a significant contributor to the county's economy.

This Element of the Comprehensive Plan addresses the policies for these existing and future seasonal and full-time residential structures.

The County and the various cities have different roles regarding public and private recreation. Rural residents, with their larger acreage home sites, do not depend upon the neighborhood parks popular in cities to the same extent as the urban population. The residents of the county, as well as others throughout the state and nation, depend upon the massive trail systems which provide hiking, horse riding, biking, and other exclusive recreational opportunities throughout the year.

The distribution of a wide variety of recreation areas over such a large expanse impacts county roads and public safety agencies. Kittitas County is a recreation destination for many out-of-county tourists,



and while this benefits local businesses, it also increases the County's recreation related expenditures. Maintaining recreational lands access and safety, and the county's existing recreation facilities, should be a key focus.

3.2.4 Allowed Zoning Densities

The Growth Management Act mandates that cities and counties focus growth toward population centers, i.e., cities and urban growth areas, to ensure that growth is both environmentally and economically sustainable over time. While there are a number of approaches to facilitate urban growth, a key approach is to ensure that growth is targeted to populated areas through zoning. While cities are required by the Growth Management Act to ensure that they have enough urban density zoning to accommodate future growth, counties are required to demonstrate that they have adequate rural zoning.

Rural zoning is mandated by the Growth Management Act to accomplish the following:

- Containing or otherwise controlling rural development
- Assuring visual compatibility of rural development with the surrounding rural area
- Reducing the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development in the rural area
- Protecting critical areas, as provided in RCW 36.70A.60³, and surface water and groundwater resources
- Protecting against conflicts with the use of agricultural, forest, and mineral resource lands designated under the RCW 36.70A.170⁴.

3.2.5 Rural Land Use Descriptions

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 3-1 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 County GIS. 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 urban growth areas or limited areas of more intensive rural development. 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. Rural Residential lands are characterized by activities generally associated with small-scale farms, dispersed single-family homes, and some types of

³ [RCW 36.70A.060 Natural resource lands and critical areas – Development regulations](#)

⁴ [RCW 36.70A.170 Natural resource lands and critical areas – Designations](#)



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.

The second rural designation within the Comprehensive 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 the rural environment and supporting agriculture and/or forest activities. Areas in this designation often have low population densities with larger parcel sizes 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. 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 Rural Development. 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. Limited areas of more intensive rural development are typically areas that were developed prior to the enactment of the Growth Management Act.

Zone classifications shown in **Table 3-1** 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 limited areas of more intensive rural development since they allow a broader and more intense mix of uses.



Table 3-1: Rural Land Use Designations, Corresponding Zoning Classifications, and Acreages

Type of Land Use	Land Use	Use Intensity	Description	Zoning	Acres		
Resource Lands	Commercial Agriculture	Resource Lands	Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance	Commercial Agriculture	289,550.8		
	Commercial Forest	Resource Lands	Forest Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance	Commercial Forest	800,316.7		
	Mineral Lands	Resource Lands	Mineral Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance	Commercial Agriculture, Commercial Forest	5,690.2		
					Section Total: 1,095,557.7		
Rural	Rural Residential	Moderate	Residential opportunities with rural character outside of UGAs and LAMIRDs	Agriculture 5	12,110.3		
				Rural 5	18,029.8		
				Planned Unit Development	42.1		
	Rural Working	Low	Supports Ag, Timber, and Mineral uses not in resource lands	Agriculture 20	111,022.0		
				Forest and Range	217,500.5		
				Planned Unit Development	503.1		
	Rural Recreation	Moderate	Activities to support and enhance recreational opportunities	Master Planned Resort	6,458.4		
				General Commercial	22.0		
				Rural Recreation	3,789.5		
	LAMIRDs	More Intense		Planned Unit Development	363.8		
		Non-incorporated urban-like development	Residential	417.0			
			Residential 2	41.8			
			Agriculture 3	43.3			
			Agriculture 20	0.0			
			Rural 3	0.0			
			Rural 5	53.5			
			Limited Commercial	13.7			
			General Commercial	195.9			
			Highway Commercial	45.3			
			Light Industrial	31.0			
			General Industrial	4.7			
			Forest and Range	75.8			
			Planned Unit Development	218.0			
					Section Total: 370,950.2		
					Rural Land Use Total: 1,466,507.9		

¹ Acreages are approximate.

Note: The totals in this table are subject to change based on improved accuracy of GIS shapefiles and assessor's information.



3.2.6 Planning for Rural and Resource Lands

Present Rural land uses in Kittitas County are a 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. 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 for agriculture and vital to the economy. Many farms have existed over a century and are very characteristic of the county's dominant rural character. Small, unincorporated communities exist throughout the county.

These communities provide distinct, yet small scale services which rural residents depend upon. Many of these communities are located within limited areas of more intensive rural development as defined by the Growth Management Act. Combined, this mix of rural densities and uses has created a landscape unique to Kittitas County's rural lifestyle.

The Rural and Resource Lands Element is intended to preserve rural character through adopted goals and policies designed to encourage and protect the types of uses that are characteristic to the rural area. The goals and policies are intended to accomplish this in part by reducing 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 ensuring appropriate services and facilities for such environments.

A variety of rural densities characteristic to a rural environment are encouraged through the adoption of goals and policies within this Element. This Element also provides for a variety of rural uses which are compatible with the county's rural character and rural levels of service. The proper mix of rural uses and densities permits rural growth to be accommodated in a variety of areas where it is compatible with adjacent resource or urban activities.

The goals and policies of this Element are also intended to provide for the preservation of viable and vibrant landscapes associated with rural character. At the same time, these policies seek to capitalize on the recreational characteristics while preserving the natural resources in the county.



The policies 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 ensuring that appropriate services and facilities are provided for rural developed environments.

The 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).

The definition of "Rural Character" is defined at RCW 36.70A.030(16) and is the basis for the following broad goals in this Element.

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

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. As Kittitas County is a primarily rural area, many of the goals and policies listed in this and other Elements are intended to be interpreted through a broad-spectrum rural lens. Rural lands planning policies include:

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3.3 Rural Goals and Policies

Each goal and policy has been assigned a unique identifier that indicates the element where it is located, specifies whether it is a goal or a policy, and includes a sequential number for organization. For example:

RR-G1 = Rural and Resource Lands Element, Goal 1

RR-P1 = Rural and Resource Lands Element, Policy 1

Following are goals that relate to the general intent of Rural lands:

3.3.1 Rural Character

RR-G1: Promote the preservation of rural character by:

- a) Promoting open space and the natural landscape,
- b) Expanding opportunities for rural lifestyles and economies,
- c) Allowing development compatible with fish and wildlife,
- d) Limiting the development of undeveloped lands and the extension of urban services, and



e) Promoting the protection of surface and ground water flows and recharge/discharge areas.

RR-P1: The County shall promote the retention of its overall character by establishing zoning classifications that preserve rural character identified to Kittitas County.

RR-P2: 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.

RR-P3: The use of cluster platting and conservation platting shall be encouraged in 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.

RR-P4: 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.

RR-P5: 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.

RR-P6: 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.

3.3.2 Rural Development

RR-G2: Provide a variety of rural development opportunities, densities, and housing choices that support rural lifestyles.

RR-P7: Incentive-based land use strategies will be examined and adopted to encourage land uses which are compatible to the rural environment.

RR-P8: Encourage development activities and establish development standards which enhance or result in the preservation of Rural lands.

RR-P9: 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.

RR-P10: 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.



- RR-P11: Set allowed densities based on the available water resources and reserve adequate resources to support the Kittitas County's economic base, including agriculture.
- RR-P12: Development shall be located distances from streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, critical areas determined necessary, and as outlined within existing Shoreline Master Program, the Critical Area Ordinance, and other adopted resource ordinances in order to protect ground and surface waters.
- RR-P13: 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.
- RR-P14: 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.
- RR-P15: 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.
- RR-P16: 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.
- RR-P17: Residential development near water will limit impervious surfaces to the size necessary to conduct the allowed use proposed on the site.
- RR-P18: New Rural Residential development shall provide adequate water for domestic use.
- RR-P19: 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.
- RR-P20: Cluster residential development in forested areas will be sited to maintain visual compatibility with the surrounding landscape and to limit the removal of natural vegetation and trees.
- RR-P21: Planned unit developments (PUD) in rural areas will only be established where such developments will not result in high density environments which require urban services and reduce maintenance of rural character.
- RR-P22: Innovative housing developments which preserve rural character will be encouraged.



RR-P23: Collaborate with cities to participate in the County's Transfer of Development Rights program, to encourage and promote the protection of Rural lands, Resource lands, and critical areas.

RR-P24: The County should provide for infrastructure and services necessary to rural development.

3.3.3 Rural Uses

RR-G3: The County should strive to sustain and protect the westerly mountainous, recreational open space, and its easterly non-resource agricultural and rangeland activities.

RR-P25: Buffer standards and regulations should continue to be developed that will be used between incompatible rural uses.

RR-P26: Encourage future subarea planning efforts to more directly implement land use and economic development measures.

RR-P27: Cottage and home occupations 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.

RR-P28: Future "General Commercial" zones will not be allowed outside urban growth areas and limited areas of more intensive rural development.

RR-P29: Kittitas County will provide criteria within its zoning code to determine what uses will be permitted within rural zone classifications to preserve rural character.

RR-P30: Residential and commercial buildings outside Type 1 limited areas of more intensive rural development will be located in areas buffered by vegetation to maintain Kittitas County's historic rural character.

RR-P31: 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.

RR-P32: Provisions will be made for roadside stands, farmers' markets, "U-pick," and customer share cropping operations.

RR-P33: County restrictions on free-running dogs shall be developed and enforced.

RR-P34: Residential uses, where permitted, shall be located where farming and forestry activities and opportunities are not negatively impacted.

RR-P35: Residences will be located to create the least interference with the movement of farm vehicles and farmlands.



3.3.4 Rural Designations and Services

RR-G4: Allow rural services and development in areas least suitable for open space preservation, recreation, and agriculture, and serving lower population densities.

RR-P36: Designate areas where lots are generally less than 10 acres in size and have a common land use pattern.

RR-P37: Permit siting in areas generally without commercial activity.

RR-P38: Preserve views of open space while providing opportunity for variety of rural densities.

RR-P39: 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.

RR-P40: 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, limited area of more intensive rural development) 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.

RR-P41: Electric and natural gas transmission and distribution facilities may be sited in any areas of Kittitas County including "Rural" designated areas, municipalities, urban growth areas, master planned resorts, and limited areas of more intensive rural development.

RR-P42: 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 will not be allowed to expand into adjacent Rural lands.

RR-P43: 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 urban growth areas
- 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



RR-P44: 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 fish and wildlife habitat and migration corridors.

RR-P45: 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.

RR-P46: Public benefits of cluster platting that are provided as Transfer of Development Rights lots shall be specifically identified on recorded plats and maintained through easements, covenants, plat notes, or other mechanisms.

3.3.5 Rural Working

RR-G5: Provide preservation of agriculture activities where producers can live and work on their own lands separate from Resource lands.

RR-P47: Irrigation delivery facilities should be managed and maintained to facilitate the unimpeded delivery of water to agricultural lands.

RR-P48: Kittitas County will continue to research new land use techniques such as Transfer of Development Rights, Purchase of Development Rights, and open space preservation tools to provide economic incentives to farmers to continue agriculture activities.

RR-P49: Kittitas County will continue to research innovative incentive-based strategies – including tax incentives - that encourage and support farming activity.

RR-P50: Kittitas County will encourage voluntary farm conservation and agriculture preservation activities, and support activities engaged in agriculture preservation.

RR-G6: Support the continuation, whenever possible, of agriculture, timber and mineral uses on lands not designated for long-term commercial significance.

RR-P51: Right to farm ordinances will continue and new ordinances achieving the objective will be researched.



RR-G7: Provide some buffer between Rural Residential lands and Resource lands.

- RR-P52: Conveyance instruments including plats and short plats, development permits, and building permits, within 500 feet of land designated as Rural Working lands or Resource lands shall contain a notice to potential buyers and residents as directed within RCW 36.70A.060(1)(b).
- RR-P53: In addition to the notice requirements in RCW 36.70A.060(1)(b), non-farming residents should be informed on the practices of farming so that they are aware of the non-urban activities and impacts that occur in the agricultural environment.
- RR-P54: Open ranges are a Resource land not subject to nuisance complaints due to residential activity.
- RR-P55: Where proposed residential development is determined in conflict with natural resource activities, all mitigation measures to make the development compatible with the activities shall be completed and cost borne by the developer.

RR-G8: Provide areas of low intensity land use activities within the agriculture and forest activities.

- RR-P56: Commercial/Industrial development in Rural Working lands shall be compatible with the rural environment and must be developed as determined necessary to not significantly impact surface and groundwater.
- RR-P57: Development standards for access, lot size and configuration, fire protection, water supply, and dwelling unit location will be adopted for development within or adjacent to forest and agriculture lands.

3.3.6 Liberty Historic District

RR-G9: Promote the continued protection of the Liberty Historic District.

- RR-P58: The Liberty Historic District is in the Rural Working land use designation. To ensure compatibility with the historic district, development in the adjacent forest lands shall conform to any standards that assure compatibility.
- RR-P59: Future development in the Liberty Historic District shall be primarily residential and be consistent with any existing or new design review standards.

3.3.7 Rural Recreation

RR-G10: Maintain and enhance the extraordinary and expansive recreational opportunities in Kittitas County.

- RR-P60: Convenience and motorist services, when permitted near highway, freeway, and major arterial intersections, shall be designed to be compatible with surrounding rural character.



RR-P61: Consider incentive programs that create active and passive open space.

RR-G11: Provide safe opportunities to develop public and private recreational spaces while preserving rural character.

RR-P62: The County should seek financial support from state and federal agencies to assist in providing for recreational area access and safety.

RR-P63: International Wildland-Urban Interface Code should be enforced when approving a recreational residential structure for greatest protection of life and property.

RR-P64: Specific natural hazards in Rural Recreation areas shall be considered before creation of habitable or residential structures.

RR-G12: Increase rural tourist and rural recreational spaces while maintaining environments characteristic to rural areas.

RR-P65: Developers should be required to approach project design which provides a visual rural environment characteristic of Kittitas County including preservation of open spaces, adequate buffering between development and natural areas, and preservation of critical areas and forested lands.

RR-P66: Rural Recreation development should be promoted where there is potential for limited infill of seasonal recreation structure, in areas where seasonal structures are not uncommon, and upon soils and geologic conditions which can support structural development.

RR-G13: Allow for and encourage commercial activities characteristic to recreational activity while maintaining rural character.

RR-P67: Developments located for commercial, residential/recreational purposes, such as master planned resorts or planned development units, shall have adequate water, septic, and public facilities to service such development without over-burdening the County public services.

RR-P68: Commercial service proposals in Rural Recreation areas shall have provisions within any conditional use decisions to assure compatibility with adjacent rural environments.

RR-P69: Commercial uses proposed for development to service recreational tourists and residents will be permitted in spaces when found to be suitable to surrounding rural areas.



3.3.8 Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Development

RR-G14: Establish areas of community pattern that accommodate community activities without having to incorporate.

RR-P70: The County should allow for designation of limited areas of more intensive rural development in the rural area, consistent with the requirements of the Growth Management Act.

RR-P71: The following factors should be considered when designating a LAMIRD and establishing boundaries:

- Existing development pattern, potential for redevelopment and infill, and for Type 1 LAMIRDS the ability to establish a logical outer boundary;
- Rural character of the potential limited area of more intensive rural development and surrounding area;
- Existing and potential mix of uses, densities and intensities, and potential impacts to the surrounding area;
- Presence/location of infrastructure and other “man-made” facilities;
- Distance from other limited areas of more intensive rural development, urban growth areas, designated resource land, or other special land use designation. If in close proximity, consider the potential for sprawl, and/or land use conflicts;
- Feasibility, cost, and need for public services;
- Significant natural constraints or features to be preserved; and
- Public input and comment.

RR-P72: Once boundaries are established, geographic expansion will not be permitted unless needed based on one or more of the following criteria:

- To correct for mapping errors, or
- To correct for other informational errors, or
- When otherwise consistent with the requirements of Growth Management Act.

RR-P73: Allow inclusion of undeveloped land in limited areas of more intensive rural development for limited infill, development, or redevelopment when consistent with rural provisions of the Growth Management Act.

RR-P74: Require that development or redevelopment harmonize with the rural character of the surrounding areas.

RR-G15: Provide opportunity for residential infill which provides a variety of housing and yet maintains rural character.

RR-P75: Development densities, intensities, or uses that require urban level of service should not be allowed.



RR-G16: Provide for rural community settings which do not require urban level services and maintain existing rural development patterns that have existed for long periods.

RR-P76: Recognize that public services will continue to be provided at a rural level of service. Public services and facilities will not be provided in a manner that allows low-density sprawl.

RR-P77: Continue to protect the long-term viability of designated forest, mineral, and agricultural resource lands.

RR-P78: Strip commercial development along state and county roads will not be permitted in any limited area of more intensive rural development.

3.4 Resource Lands

Kittitas County has utilized the standards set forth in RCW 36.70A.170 to designate Resource lands, which may not currently be characterized by urban growth and must have long term commercial significance. In using these criteria, Kittitas County relied on the definitions found in RCW 36.70A.030 relative to Resource lands, and to designate these lands into three categories: lands of commercial agriculture, lands of commercial forest, and mineral resource lands.

A large portion of Kittitas County contains forested lands. Of these lands, 800,317 acres have been designated as forestlands of long-term commercial significance and are classified under the "Commercial Forest" land use within the Comprehensive Plan. Approximately 289,551 acres of the County's designated agricultural land of long-term commercial significance are classified under the "Commercial Agriculture". Designated Mineral Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance are classified under the "Mineral Lands" land use, covering approximately 5,690 acres in six different Rural and Resource lands zones.

3.4.1 Planning of Resource Lands

As provided in the Growth Management Act, a primary purpose of this Rural and Resource Lands Element is to implement a combination of techniques to preserve Resource lands. In addition to the traditional large-lot zoning categories that limit the density of development and restrict or prohibit inappropriate uses of Resource lands, Kittitas County is committed to implementing innovative land use management techniques in Resource lands as permitted by the Growth Management Act including, but not limited to, Transfer of Development Rights and conservation platting.

Such innovative techniques that allow development on one portion of land while leaving the remainder in Resource or Open Space use will be carefully created in regulations to preserve and protect Resource lands. Such innovative development activity will be properly managed and designed to assure conservation of Resource lands and to encourage the continuation of the predominant agricultural and resource-based economy of Kittitas County.

Commercial Agriculture lands are those that have been identified as lands with soil and location characteristics that suggest that they will be used for commercial agriculture use in perpetuity and are



considered a resource to the economy. Commercial Forest lands are those that have been identified as areas where logging has been the main source of activity in the past and where such lands can or will be preserved for that resource and activities associated with forests. Mineral lands that have long-term significance for extraction of minerals allow for the extraction of mineral resources and occur in various zones.

The following are general goals and policies for all Resource lands in Kittitas County.

RR-G17: Plan for long-term sustainability of natural resource lands including forest, agriculture, and mining areas.

- RR-P79: Conserve important natural resource lands with the implementation of a Transfer of Development Rights program, a market-based tool in which landowners volunteer to sell the right to develop their land to areas where greater density is more appropriate, permanently conserving specified natural resource lands.
- RR-P80: Development standards for lot size and configuration, fire protection, water supply, and structure location will be adopted for land use activity within or adjacent to Resource lands.
- RR-P81: Kittitas County will continue to research innovative incentive-based ordinances that encourage and preserve Resource land activity.
- RR-P82: Open ranges are a Resource land not subject to nuisance complaints due to residential activity.
- RR-P83: The County should research tax incentives that encourage the establishment and continuance of Resource land protection and preservation.
- RR-P84: Where proposed development is determined to be incompatible with natural resource activities, all mitigation measures to make the development compatible with the activities shall be completed at the expense of the developer.
- RR-P85: Forest land and agricultural land located within urban growth areas should not be designated by a county or a city as forest land or agricultural land of long-term commercial significance, unless the city or county has enacted a program authorizing transfer or purchase of development rights.
- RR-P86: Lands designated commercial agriculture or commercial forest lands should not be used to expand an urban growth area or designated as future urban growth expansion areas.
- RR-P87: Ongoing agriculture and forestry activities in rural working and resource lands should not be unduly restricted by development regulations.



3.4.2 Commercial Agriculture Land Use

The purpose and intent of this designation is to comply with the requirements of the Growth Management Act to guide adoption of regulations which ensure that use of lands adjacent to Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Significance will not interfere with continued use of that land for agricultural purposes (RCW 36.70A.060). In classifying and conserving the Agriculture Resource lands in Kittitas County, it has considered the minimum guidelines found in WAC 365-190 including:

- Lands not characterized by urban growth;
- Lands capable of being used for agricultural production based primarily on physical and geographic characteristics; and
- Lands having long-term significance for agriculture which takes into account, among other things, the proximity to urban growth areas, public facilities and services, intensity of nearby uses, and other things which might contribute to potential revision of use based upon marketing factors.

It is the County's intent to meet these agricultural resource requirements by establishing a "Commercial Agricultural" designation. Based on the review criteria established by Kittitas County, land located in the Commercial Agricultural Zone has been formally designated as "Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance."

Comprehensive Plan Goals Regarding Designation of Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance

For purposes of designating Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance, and in considering any request for de-designation of such lands, Kittitas County has identified the following criteria:

Designation and De-designation of Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance

The purpose of this section is to identify the goals and policies in Kittitas County necessary to implement Goal 8 (RCW 36.70A.020(8)) of the Growth Management Act concerning Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance.

(8) Natural resource industries. Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agriculture, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forest lands and productive agricultural lands and discourage incompatible uses.

All decisions dealing with the designation or de-designation of Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance shall be in support of that goal.

1. Definitions.

The County adopts and shall utilize the following definitions and considerations:

"Agricultural land" means 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 subject to the excise tax imposed under RCW 84.33.100 through 84.33.140, finfish in upland hatcheries, or livestock, and that has long-term commercial significance for agricultural production.⁵

“Long-term commercial significance” includes the growing capacity, productivity, and soil composition of the land for long-term commercial production, in consideration with the land’s proximity to population areas, and the possibility of more intense uses of the land.

In determining “the combined effects of proximity to population areas and the possibility of more intense uses of the land” upon agricultural lands, the County shall consider: (a) the availability of public facilities; (b) tax status; (c) the availability of public services; (d) relationship or proximity to urban growth areas; (e) predominant parcel size; (f) land use settlement patterns and their compatibility with agricultural practices; (g) intensity of nearby land uses; (h) history of land development permits issued nearby; (i) land values under alternative uses; and (j) proximity of markets.

2. Designation Criteria.

In order to be designated Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance in Kittitas County, the land must: (1) not be characterized by urban growth; (2) be primarily devoted to agriculture; and (3) have long-term significance for agriculture.

Land shall be designated Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance (referred to as Commercial Agricultural Lands in the Kittitas County Code in accordance with the designation criteria and considerations set forth herein.

- A. **Land Grade Consideration.** Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance shall be prime and unique farmland soils as mapped by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service and considered capable of agricultural use according to land capability criteria in Agriculture Handbook No. 210 or successor guide adopted by the federal agency.
- B. **Other consideration.** In determining whether land should be designated as Agricultural Land of Long-Term Commercial Significance, the County may also consider the needs and nature of the agricultural industry.
- C. **Designation.** Upon a determination that a tract qualifies as Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance (referred to as Commercial Agricultural Lands in the Kittitas County Code) under the definitions and considerations noted above, such lands shall be so mapped in the Comprehensive Land Use Plan Map of Kittitas County and shall be zoned Commercial Agricultural lands under Kittitas County zoning code, section KCC 17.31. The County's Commercial Agricultural Zoning Code, KCC 17.31, shall control uses, maintenance, and enhancement of the agricultural industry and conserve productive agricultural lands consistent with the needs and best practices of the industry. Lands presently mapped as “commercial

⁷ ACS 2019-2023 5-Year Estimates, Table S0101



“agriculture” shall retain that designation unless a specific de-designation request is filed by the owner for a review under the guidelines of this Ordinance.

3. De-designation criteria.

- A. **Definitions.** De-designation is a change of land classification from Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance to another Growth Management Act classification.
- B. **De-designation criteria.** The considerations and criteria for de-designation are the same as the considerations and criteria for designation identified in Sections 1 and 2 above. De-designation requests may be initiated by the County or by individuals based on a request to consider (1) a mistake in the original designation or (2) that factors leading to the original designation have changed, rendering the site inappropriate for Long-Term Commercially Significant Agricultural Land designation.
- C. A de-designation request shall provide a legal description of the property subject to the request and map showing the agricultural land grades listed above for the property. The request shall specifically address each of the factors above deemed pertinent to the consideration of designation and de-designation.

4. Applications and Processing.

- A. Applications for the designation of Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance shall be docketed with the planning department for annual consideration by the Kittitas County Planning Commissioners and Board of County Commissioners as a change to the County Comprehensive Plan and Map in accordance with Chapter 15.B of the Kittitas County Code. Applications for de-designations of Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance must be accompanied, and processed along with, a specific development application.
- B. In determining a request to designate or de-designate Agricultural Land of Long-Term Commercial Significance, the County may consider the needs and nature of the agriculture industry (*Lewis County v. Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Bd.*, 157 Wn.2d 488, 139 P.3d 1096 (2006)).
- C. In considering a request for de-designation, the County shall make the same considerations as in designating lands under the provisions of Section 2 above (*City of Redmond v. Central Puget Sound Growth Management Hearings Board*, 116 Wn. App. 48, 65 P.3d 337 (2003) (Benaroya II)).
- D. In addition to such considerations as may be undertaken by the County under these provisions, the County shall address in writing: (1) the factors that warrant the designation or de-designation, and (2) how the action meets the objectives of Goal 8 of Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.020(8)) to maintain and enhance a productive agriculture industry and to encourage the conservation of productive agricultural lands and to discourage incompatible uses when making a decision on designation or de-designation of Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance.



The following are policies to protect and ensure continued employment of Commercial Agricultural land use.

RR-G18: Preserve the long-term commercial viability of agricultural lands.

RR-P88: The County will oppose laws and regulations which restrict agriculture and support laws and regulations which enhance agriculture.

RR-P89: The County should develop a study area where the various Rural land use designations and the Commercial Agriculture designation interface occurs which may lead to the development of a Commercial Agriculture Transition Zone overlay. The study area should consider but not be limited to:

- Strategies that site land use activities within or adjacent to Commercial Agriculture lands that minimize conflicts with agricultural activities.
- Effectiveness of Transfer of Development Rights from Commercial Agriculture to Rural lands.
- Use of Cluster Development to minimize impacts.
- Use of open space to act as a “buffer” between Rural and Commercial Agriculture designations.

RR-P90: Continue and expand support for right-to-farm ordinances.

RR-P91: The County should promote the preservation of agricultural activities through programs that encourage long-term ownership and production on agricultural lands.

RR-P92: Kittitas County recognizes that new residents may not understand the difference in rural living encountered in the county; therefore, the County supports the efforts of educational opportunities and agencies to educate on rural living and agricultural activities of long-term significance.

RR-P93: The County should encourage development projects whose outcome will be the significant conservation of farmlands.

RR-P94: The County should identify and designate agriculture transportation corridors that facilitate farm use.

RR-P95: The County should participate in sound voluntary farm conservation or preservation plans (i.e., be recipients and overseers for conservation easements and/or assist with Transfer of Development Rights programs).

RR-P96: The County should investigate additional tax incentives to retain productive agricultural lands.



RR-P97: The County should create a Growth Management Agricultural Advisory Council comprised only of agriculture producers to review and make recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners on at least an annual basis over the coming 20 years on:

- the status of agriculture in Kittitas County,
- County agriculture policies and regulations,
- local agriculture marketing and economic planning, and
- review and make recommendations regarding zoning and development regulations.

RR-P98: Current agricultural uses in urban residential areas should continue to be allowed as the lands transition to urban residential uses.

RR-P99: The County should provide for flexible use of agricultural lands that are located in areas with limited or no irrigation.

RR-P100: The County will continue to support development and implementation of the Yakima Basin Integrated Management Plan to support water supply for agricultural lands.

Commercial Agriculture Land Incentives

It is the policy of Kittitas County to encourage and support agricultural uses of lands within the Commercial Agricultural designation. The County will continue to explore additional incentives for conserving both Rural and Resource lands. These incentives may be developed through the Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan and subsequent implementation mechanisms.

RR-G19: Provide the opportunity for communication and incentive development for the preservation of commercial agricultural lands.

RR-P101: The County should establish an Agricultural Advisory Commission to advise the Board of County Commissioners on agricultural issues.

RR-P102: The County should develop incentives for farming and ranching to continue as significant land uses, for example, innovative cluster platting, Transfer of Development Rights, planned development units, and agricultural commercial binding site plan for agriculture-supporting uses.

RR-P103: The County should work with landowners to ensure waters in naturally occurring ponds and springs (with no surface connection to a stream) are retained for stock water uses when they are on or adjacent to lands used as pasture or range for livestock.

RR-P104: Where appropriate, Kittitas County will exert its influence to help provide the delivery of water to all lands within the county.



RR-P105: Encourage all development to incorporate drought tolerant or native vegetation as a major component of their landscaping plan (i.e., xeriscaping)

RR-P106: To the extent possible, the Board of County Commissioners shall promote processing facilities for the products produced upon those lands designated as Commercial Agricultural under this Element and WAC 365.190.050 (6).

RR-P107: All plats, short plats, development permits, and building permits issued for development activities on, or within 500 feet of, lands designated as Commercial Agricultural lands, Forest lands, or Mineral Resource lands, shall contain a notice that states that: "The subject property is within or near designated Agricultural lands, Forest lands, or Mineral Resource lands on which a variety of commercial activities and mineral operations may occur that are not compatible with residential development for certain periods of limited duration. Commercial natural resource activities and/or mineral operations performed in accordance with County, state, and federal laws are not subject to legal action as public nuisances." (RCW 7.48.305)

3.4.3 Commercial Forest Land

Commercial Forest land use, approximately 800,317 acres, makes up approximately half of the Kittitas County land area. A checkerboard pattern of private, state, and federal land ownerships characterizes the county forests. The primary land use activities in Commercial Forest land use areas are commercial forest management, forest recreation, agriculture, mineral extraction, sand and gravel operations, and those uses that maintain and/or enhance the long-term management of designated commercial forest lands.

Traditionally, forestlands in the county contributed regional economic value by providing employment and income from resource management, which includes harvesting, fishing, hunting, mining, grazing, and recreation. Even though revenue has diminished from forest products, it is recognized that forestlands provide other public benefits and values such as watersheds and wildlife and fish habitats. It is recognized that the land use designation "Commercial Forest Lands" has been used to encompass all forested lands that do provide a variety of public benefits including non-productive and high elevation lands within ownerships.

It is clear that the legislature intended that counties planning under the Growth Management Act should consider land characteristics and economic factors when designating commercial forest lands. As stated by the Washington Supreme Court, "the GMA is not intended to trap anyone in economic failure." *Lewis County v. Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Board*, 157 Wash.2d 488, 505 (2006).

For purposes of designating Forest Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance, and in considering any request for de-designation of such lands, Kittitas County has identified the following criteria.



Designation and De-designation of Forest Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance

The purpose of this section is to identify the goals and policies in Kittitas County necessary to implement Goal 8 of the Growth Management Act concerning Forest Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance:

(8) Natural resource industries. Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agricultural, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forest lands and productive agricultural lands and discourage incompatible uses.

All decisions dealing with the designation or de-designation of Forest resource lands shall be in support of that goal.

1. Definitions.

The County adopts and shall utilize the following definitions and considerations:

- A. "Forest land" means land primarily devoted to growing trees for long-term commercial timber production on land that can be economically and practically managed for such production, including Christmas trees subject to the excise tax imposed under RCW 84.33.100 through 84.33.140, and that has long-term commercial significance.⁶
- B. "Long-term commercial significance" includes the growing capacity, productivity, and soil composition of the land for long-term commercial production, in consideration with the land's proximity to population areas, and the possibility of more intense uses of the land.
- C. In determining whether forest land is "primarily devoted to growing trees for long-term commercial timber production on land that can be economically and practically managed for such production," the following factors shall be considered: (a) The proximity of the land to urban, suburban, and rural settlements; (b) surrounding parcel size and the compatibility and intensity of adjacent and nearby land uses; (c) long-term local economic conditions that affect the ability to manage for timber production; and (d) the availability of public facilities and services conducive to conversion of forest land to other uses.

2. Designation Criteria.

In order to be designated Forest Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance in Kittitas County, the land must: (1) not be characterized by urban growth; (2) be primarily devoted to the growing of trees for long-term commercial timber production on land that can be economically and practically managed for such production, and (3) have long-term significance for the commercial production of timber.

Land shall be designated Forest Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance (referred to as Commercial Forest Lands in the Kittitas County Code) in accordance with the designation criteria and considerations set forth herein.

⁷ ACS 2019-2023 5-Year Estimates, Table S0101



- A. **Land Grade Consideration.** In Kittitas County, the most common tree species are ponderosa pine and dry mixed conifer, including Douglas fir. Most of the forest lands in Kittitas County are composed of land grades 4 and 5 as mapped by the Department of Natural Resources. Forest Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance shall include lands that have a predominance of land grades 3-6 (i.e., more than 60% of the site has requisite land grade) as defined in WAC 458-40-530.
- B. **Other Mandatory Factors.** In the designation of Forest Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance, the County shall also consider and address in writing the effects of proximity to population areas and the possibility of more intense uses of the subject land as indicated by (WAC 365-190-060):
 - 1) The availability of public services and facilities conducive to the conversion of forest land.
 - 2) The proximity of forest land to urban and suburban areas and rural settlements: Forest Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance are located outside the urban and suburban areas and rural settlements.
 - 3) The size of the parcels: Forest lands consists of predominantly large parcels.
 - 4) The compatibility and intensity of adjacent and nearby land use and settlement patterns with Forest Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance.
 - 5) Property tax classification: Property is assessed as Open Space or Forest land pursuant to chapter 84.33 or 84.34 RCW.
 - 6) Local economic conditions which affect the ability to manage timberlands for long-term commercial production.
 - 7) History of land development permits issued nearby.
- C. **Other considerations.** In determining whether land should be designated as Forest Land of Long-Term Commercial Significance, the County may also consider the needs and nature of the timber industry.
- D. **Designation.** Upon a determination that a tract qualifies as Forest Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance (denominated Commercial Forest Lands in the Kittitas County Code under the definitions and considerations noted above, such lands shall be so mapped in the Comprehensive Land Use Plan Map of Kittitas County and shall be zoned Commercial Forest lands under Kittitas County zoning code, section KCC 17.57. The County's Commercial Forest zoning code, KCC 17.57, shall control uses, maintenance, and enhancement of the forest products industry and conserve productive forest lands consistent with the needs and best practices of the industry. Lands presently mapped as "Commercial Forest" shall retain that designation unless a specific de-designation request is filed by the owner for a review under the guidelines of this Ordinance.



3. De-designation Criteria.

- A. **Definitions.** De-designation is a change of land classification from Forest Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance to another Growth Management Act classification.
- B. **De-designation Criteria.** The considerations and criteria for de-designation are the same as the considerations and criteria for designation identified in Sections 1 and 2 above. De-designation requests may be initiated by the County or by individuals based on a request to consider (1) a mistake in the original designation or (2) that factors leading to the original designation have changed, rendering the site inappropriate for Long-Term Commercially Significant Forest Land designation.
- C. A de-designation request shall provide a legal description of the property subject to the request and map showing the Forest land grades listed above for the property. The request shall specifically address each of the factors above deemed pertinent to the consideration of designation and de-designation.

4. Applications and Processing.

- A. Applications for the designation of Forest Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance shall be docketed with the Planning Department for annual consideration by the Kittitas County Planning Commissioners and Board of County Commissioners as a change to the County Comprehensive Plan and Map in accordance with Chapter 15.B of the KCC. Applications for de-designations from Forest Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance to another Growth Management Act designation may only be sought in conjunction with a specific development proposal.
- B. In determining a request to designate or de-designate Forest Land of Long-Term Commercial Significance, the County may consider the needs and nature of the timber industry (*Lewis County v. Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Bd.*, 157 Wn.2d 488, 139 P.3d 1096 (2006)).
- C. In considering a request for de-designation, the County shall make the same considerations as in designating lands under the provisions of Section 2 above (*City of Redmond v. Central Puget Sound Growth Management Hearings Board*, 116 Wn. App. 48, 65 P.3d 337 (2003) (Benaroya II)).
- D. In addition to such considerations as may be undertaken by the County under these provisions, the County shall address in writing: (1) all of the factors that warrant the designation or de-designation, and (2) how the action meets the objectives of Goal 8 of Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.020(8)) to maintain and enhance a productive timber industry, to encourage the conservation of productive Forest lands and to discourage incompatible uses when making a decision on designation or de-designation of Forest Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance.



Below are the policies for activities on Commercial Forest lands.

RR-G20: Protect the continued preservation of forest lands.

RR-P108: The County should promote active management of lands to create and maintain healthy forests through support of related infrastructure.

RR-P109: Classification and designation of Forest Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance shall be made to maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber industries.

RR-P110: Any proposal for de-designation of Commercial Forest lands shall be subject to a cumulative impacts analysis, including the size and ownership of the commercial forestlands remaining in the county, the needs of the local forest products industry and impacts to those needs by the proposed de-designation, and the potential benefits that may result from the proposed de-designation including higher property taxes and economic stimulus.

RR-P111: The County should encourage incentives and alternatives to keep working forests viable by considering when feasible emerging markets such as carbon sequestration, Transfer of Development Rights, biofuel, and bio-energy production that offset the loss of the traditional log and special forest product markets.

RR-P112: Resource activities performed in accordance with County, state, and federal laws should not be subject to legal actions as public nuisances.

RR-P113: The County should support and encourage the maintenance of Commercial Forest lands in timber and current use property tax classifications consistent with RCW 84.28, 84.33 and 84.34.

RR-P114: Kittitas County will support local forest landowners seeking regulatory relief to help them remain economically viable.

RR-P115: Land use activities within or adjacent to Commercial Forest land will be sited and designed to minimize conflicts with forest management and other activities on commercial forestlands.

RR-P116: Kittitas County will encourage rural developments in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) and the owners of adjacent Commercial Forest lands to develop Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs).

RR-P117: When appropriate, the County will encourage cluster developments on adjacent non-Commercial Forest lands so that open space buffers adjacent forest land from development.

RR-P118: Kittitas County will advocate active management of federal and state forest lands to create and maintain healthy, fire-safe forests.



RR-P119: It is the policy of the County to encourage the continuation of Commercial Forest management by:

- Supporting land trades that result in consolidated forest ownership; and
- Working with forest managers to identify and develop other incentives for continued forestry; and
- Encouraging and supporting a local and regional infrastructure of manufacturing facilities that use wood products within an economically viable 100-mile circle.

RR-P120: The County shall require that all plats, short plats, development permits, and building permits issued for development activities on, or within 500 feet of, lands designated as Commercial Forest lands contain a notice that states that: "The subject property is within or near designated Agricultural lands, Forest lands, or Mineral Resource lands on which a variety of commercial activities and mineral operations may occur that are not compatible with residential development for certain periods of limited duration. Commercial natural resource activities and/or mineral operations performed in accordance with County, state, and federal laws are not subject or legal action as public nuisances."

3.4.4 Commercial Mineral Resource Lands

The Growth Management title of the Revised Code of Washington states that each county shall designate, where appropriate, "Mineral Resource lands that are not already characterized by urban growth and that have long-term significance for extraction of minerals" (RCW 36.70A.170). The Act defines minerals as sand, gravel, and valuable metallic substances, and states that each county shall adopt development regulations to assure the conservation of Mineral Resource lands (RCW 36.70A.060).

In classifying Mineral Resource lands, Kittitas County shall identify and classify aggregate and Mineral Resource lands from which the extraction of minerals occurs or can be anticipated. Areas for sand, gravel, and other metallic substances of long-term commercial significance shall be identified by the County. Proposed land uses within these areas designated as Mineral Resource lands may require special consideration to ensure future supply of aggregate and mineral resource material will be available.

Classification of Mineral Resource lands shall be based on geographic, environmental, economic factors, existing land uses, and land ownership. Kittitas County shall also consider the combined effects of proximity to population areas and the possibility of more intense uses of the lands as indicated by:

- a. General land use patterns in the area
- b. The availability of utilities or public services
- c. Relationship or proximity to urban growth areas, which shall include areas where historic growth has occurred



- d. Predominant surrounding parcel size, subdivision, zoning for urban or small lots, or land settlement patterns and their compatibility with Mineral Lands of Long-Term Significance;
- e. Intensity of nearby land uses
- f. History of land development, or permits issued nearby
- g. Land values under alternative uses
- h. Location of public roads, access, or proximity to the point of use or markets
- i. Availability and adequate water supplies
- j. Physical and topographical characteristics of the mineral resource site
- k. Depth of the resource
- l. Depth of the overburden
- m. Physical properties of the resource including quality and type
- n. Life of the resource
- o. Resource availability in the region
- p. Long-term economic conditions which affect the ability to manage and/or maintain commercially viable Mineral Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance, which should include consideration of the following market factors:
 - The location of manufacturing or processing facilities
 - Equipment and transport costs
 - Site productivity and production costs
 - Taxes and administrative costs

De-designation

Kittitas County hereby adopts the following provision with respect to de-designation of Mineral Resource land:

1. Change in circumstances pertaining to the Comprehensive Plan or public policy;
2. A change in circumstances beyond the control of the landowner pertaining to the subject property;
3. An error in designation; or
4. New information on Natural Resources land or critical area status.

In considering any one of these elements, the criteria for designation should additionally be considered.

Areas meeting the criteria for Mineral Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance and classified as such, including future discoveries, are designated on the final Comprehensive Plan Map and included in the final Comprehensive Plan. The Map shows the location of Mineral Lands of Long-Term Significance and will be updated and amended as new mining sites, meeting the designation criteria, are approved.

RR-G21: Protect the continuation of viable mineral lands as part of Kittitas County's rural economy.

RR-P121: The County should allow for extraction of mineral resources where such extraction does not significantly impact other natural resources.



RR-P122: When the County reviews proposed new land uses that have the potential to conflict with commercial mining activities, such as residential subdivisions, consideration of both surface and mineral rights ownership should be included in the review.

RR-P123: New uses, such as residential and commercial uses, conflicting with existing commercial mining activities in designated Mineral Resource areas shall be required to locate away from such mining activities.

RR-P124: The County shall require that all plats, short plats, development permits, and building permits issued for development activities on, or within 500 feet of, lands designated as Mineral Resource lands, shall contain a notice that states that: "The subject property is within or near designated Mineral Resource lands on which a variety of commercial activities and mineral operations may occur that are not compatible with residential development for certain periods of limited duration. Commercial natural resource activities and/or mineral operations performed in accordance with County, state, and federal laws are not subject or legal action as public nuisances."

RR-P125: The impact of potential residential/commercial development upon Mineral Resource Lands of Long-Term Significance shall be considered when determining the compatibility of the proposed development within the Rural area.



4 HOUSING

4.1 Introduction

Housing impacts the character of our region; helps to define our quality of life; and plays an important role in both state and local economies. The purpose of this Element is to describe Kittitas County's goals and policies for the preservation, improvement, and development of housing, and the mechanisms that will lead to affordable housing opportunities at all economic levels of the population. This Element identifies existing housing conditions and needs within Kittitas County, while anticipating housing needs for the period of 2026 - 2046.

Included at the end of this Element is a stated list of goals and policies to preserve existing housing stock, promote a variety of residential densities, and encourage the availability of affordable housing for all economic segments of the community.

In accordance with the Growth Management Act, this Element ensures the vitality and character of established residential neighborhoods, encourages the availability of affordable housing for all demographics, promotes a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourages preservation of existing and historical housing stock.

4.2 Housing Conditions, Trends, and Needs

To effectively plan for the housing needs of Kittitas County's current and future residents, it is necessary to assess the existing housing conditions and needs within the county. This section describes the number, type, and character of housing units within Kittitas County. It also describes the population of Kittitas County as it relates to existing and future housing availability.

A significant portion of the data contained herein comes from the US Bureau of Census 2019-2023 5-year estimates, Washington State Employment Security Department, and the 2024 OFM estimates. Other information in this section comes from the Housing Needs Assessment and Land Capacity Analysis prepared as part of this Comprehensive Plan update. These reports are included in the Appendices for reference.

4.2.1 Number, Type, and Distribution of Housing Units

According to the 2024 OFM estimates, Kittitas County has approximately 24,326 housing units. More than half of the housing units (55%), are located within unincorporated areas. According to the 2020 OFM analysis, the largest city, Ellensburg, has 37% of the county's housing units. **Table 4-1** shows the distribution of housing units by city and unincorporated areas for 2000, 2010, 2015, and 2020, and the percentage change in the housing distribution over the 20-year period.



Table 4-1: Housing Unit Distribution and Percent Growth by Area

Jurisdiction	2000	2010	2015	2020	Percentage Growth (2000-2020)
Kittitas County	16,475	21,900	23,084	23,743	44.1%
Unincorporated Kittitas County	7,444	11,430	12,139	12,242	64.4%
Incorporated Kittitas County	9,031	10,470	10,945	11,501	27.3%
<i>Cle Elum</i>	956	1,105	1,098	1,116	16.7%
<i>Ellensburg</i>	6,732	7,867	8,315	8,924	32.5%
<i>Kittitas</i>	510	579	618	591	15.8%
<i>Roslyn</i>	623	648	645	611	-1.9%
<i>South Cle Elum</i>	210	271	269	259	23.3%

Source: Office of Financial Management, 2025

Availability of Utilities

The majority of housing units located within unincorporated Kittitas County are not served by public water or sewer systems. The number and percentage of housing units on private wells and septic tanks have surpassed those currently connected to city systems. The majority of existing housing units in Kittitas County are owner occupied single-family units. In 2023, approximately 62% of the county's housing units were owner-occupied.

Existing Conditions

According to the 2021 Kittitas County Homelessness and Affordable Housing Plan, nearly one-third of all housing units were built before 1970, many owned or occupied by elderly individuals or low-income families who struggle to afford repairs and upgrades. Of the occupied housing units in Kittitas County, 37.7% are renter-occupied.

Of the total housing units, 71% are one-unit housing units, 22% are two or more-unit housing units, and 6% are mobile homes or "specials" (defined as an entity that owns and/or manages one or more group quarter facilities).

Development Trends

Kittitas County has a population of approximately 48,600 in 2024. Kittitas County's 2046 projected population is 60,621, a total growth increase of 24.7% over the planning period, or 12,021 people.

Data suggests a potential demand for smaller affordable homes to accommodate two major groups: Retirees and first-time home buyers. Those between the ages of 15 and 24 make up nearly 20% of the county population, and those age 65 or older comprise about 25% of the county population. Over the



next 20 years, much of the working-age population (nearly 25% of the population) is expected to transition into retirement as well, creating more demand for affordable living.

Two-person households are the largest market for renter-occupied housing within Kittitas County, accounting for 40.7% of households (3,006 households), followed by one-person households with 36.4% of the market at 2,688 households.

Median home values in the county doubled between 2017 and 2024, mirroring statewide median home value increases. In the same time period, median household income only increased by about 32%, increasing the rate of cost-burdened households.

Approximately 7,349 people who live outside of the county come into the county limits to work. Approximately 10,540 both live and work within the county, and 10,540 live in the county but work outside of the county, indicating that about 51% of the 20,631 workers living in the county are employed outside of the county. Approximately 48% of workers in the county are between 30 and 54 years old, and 44.1% of workers have an income under \$40,000 per year. Median income ranges for certain essential occupations range from \$26,509 for agricultural workers to a median income of \$92,498 for law enforcement workers. Approximately 10.3% of Kittitas County's population identifies as Hispanic or Latino, slightly lower than statewide demographic estimates of 14%.

Approximately 46.8% of all renter-occupied households and 19.6% of owner-occupied households in Kittitas County were considered cost-burdened in 2021, spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs. Of these households, 2,257 spend over 50% or more of their income on housing costs. With 5,720 cost-burdened households and a supply of only 2,430 income-restricted housing units, the county is currently in demand for 2,530 affordable housing units.

By 2046, 5,626 housing units will be needed to accommodate future population growth, or around 281 housing units built per year. Current building data assumes that 464 units will be built every year until then, which surpasses the projected growth targets. That said, affordability limitations indicate a need for at least 2,530 of these houses to be affordable units, and for units designed to accommodate households of two to three people.

4.2.2 Tenure and Occupancy Rates

According to the 2024 OFM estimates, Kittitas County has approximately 24,326 housing units. Of the identified housing units, 19,601 were occupied as of 2023. This suggests approximately 4,725 units were vacant within Kittitas County at the time of the survey. These vacant units include seasonal and recreational households, and units available for rent at the time of the survey. In some areas of the county such as Easton, Snoqualmie Pass, and Swauk-Teanaway, seasonal and recreational units comprise a majority of the vacant housing stock. In total, seasonal and recreational units represent approximately 67% of vacant units within Kittitas County.



Housing Ownership

Of the occupied units, approximately 12,221 were occupied by the owner, while the remaining 7,380 were renter-occupied. This represents a home ownership rate of 62%. This rate represents a marginal drop in home ownership over the last 15 years. Future planning efforts assisting first-time homebuyers and offering housing in various price ranges may work to reverse this trend. Some options are explored in the Housing Element Goals and Policies.

Central Washington University (CWU) represents the largest generator of group housing quarters, as many students are housed on campus throughout the year. With the planned expansion of CWU, affordable housing stock (especially in the Ellensburg area) is expected to become increasingly student (non-permanent resident) oriented.

Supported Living

Assisted living facilities and foster care facilities represent other forms of group living quarters that currently exist within Kittitas County. Persons in assisted living facilities include individuals with special needs, and those of aging populations. Approximately 7,691 (23.7%) of Kittitas County's population is 65 years or over⁷. As this generation nears retirement, there will be a growing need for additional senior housing and assisted or supportive living units. Smaller housing units and accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are popular options for individuals and families post-retirement. By law, this population is eligible to live in legally "age-restricted" communities.

Other persons living in group quarters include individuals with developmental disabilities. As these individuals age, it is likely that some will require assisted living or nursing care facilities.⁸

4.2.3 Value and Cost of Housing

Sale prices of homes are a common indicator of the value of homes available within a community. The median home value in Kittitas County in 2024 was \$501,909 which is lower than the state median home value of \$580,890. The median home value in the county has increased by approximately 122.5% since 2014. This represents more than a double in the median home value in 2014 from \$225,732 to \$501,909 in 2024. Washington State median home values have increased at a slower rate than Kittitas County with an average increase of 105.8% for the state median home values. These extreme increases are the result of the global Covid-19 pandemic, proximity to the highest growth centers in the state (Puget Sound), and the rapid growth in the country which results in the high percentage of cost-burdened households in the county.

⁷ ACS 2019-2023 5-Year Estimates, Table S0101

⁸ Kittitas County Mental Health/Developmental Disability Board



Housing Affordability

This increase in home purchase prices has made home ownership beyond the affordability of many potential homebuyers. In a similar period where median home values and rent cost rose 122.5% and 35.9%, respectively, the median household income in the county rose 54% overall from \$45,406 in 2014 to \$69,928 in 2023. In Kittitas County, there are more renters that are housing cost-burdened than owners. A household is considered cost-burdened when more than 30% of their household income is spent on housing. A household is considered severely cost-burdened when more than 50% of their household income is spent on housing.

Between the 2017-2021 survey years, there were a total of 3,518 cost-burdened renter-occupied households in Kittitas County, which means they were paying more than 30% of their income on housing costs. Approximately 2,354 of these households were severely cost-burdened, which means they were paying more than 50% of their income on housing costs. Overall, approximately 47% of all the renter-occupied households in Kittitas County were paying more than 30% of their income on housing costs (out of 7,515 total renter-occupied households). The household income group with the most cost-burdened households is the <=30% HAMFI⁹, which (in 2024) are households making approximately \$31,200. Additionally, the household income group with the highest rate of cost-burdened households is also the <=30% HAMFI with 86% of households in this income group experiencing cost-burden, which (in 2024) are households making approximately \$31,200. Approximately 1,770 households in the <=30% HAMFI group are experiencing cost-burden of the 1,900 households in this income group.

Compared to the number of cost-burdened renter-occupied households, owner-occupied households show a lower number of cost-burdened households. Between the 2017-2021 survey years, the total number of cost-burdened owner-occupied households was 2,202, which makes up about 20% of all the owner-occupied households in the county. Of these households, 1,109 households were severely cost-burdened, which means they were paying more than 50% of their household income on housing costs. The highest rates of cost-burdened owner-occupied households are similar to the renter-occupied households with over half of the households making 0-80% of the HAMFI being cost-burdened. Overall, the figures show that 19.6% of owner-occupied households and 46.8% of renter-occupied households are cost-burdened. In total, in the 2017-2021 census years, 30% of all households in Kittitas County are cost-burdened and 18% of all households are severely cost-burdened, approximately 5,720 and 2,257 total households, respectively.

Rental Properties

Median rent in Kittitas County has risen at a slower rate than Washington State, and the median rent is lower than the state average. The median rent for rental properties (including apartments, houses, and condos) has increased in Kittitas County at a rate of 35.9% between 2014 and 2024. This represents an average increase from \$925 a month in 2014 to \$1,257 a month in 2024 for the county. This increased

⁹ HAMFI - HUD Area Median Family Income. This is the median family income calculated by Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for each jurisdiction, in order to determine Fair Market Rents (FMRs) and income limits for HUD programs. HAMFI will not necessarily be the same as other calculations of median incomes (such as a simple Census number), due to a series of adjustments that are made.



the rate of cost-burdened renter-occupied households in Kittitas County. During that same period, the median monthly rent in the state increased by 71.3% from \$1,070 in 2014 to \$1,833 in 2024.

Housing Availability

As part of Kittitas County's 2026 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, the County adopted future population and housing unit targets that the County and cities within the county will plan for during the planning period (2026-2046). The growth allocations indicate that Kittitas County will need an additional 5,626 housing units to accommodate future population growth. This equates to approximately 12,021 additional people living in Kittitas County, representing a 24.7% increase in total population over the county's 2024 population. There was an estimated 1,843 housing units built in Kittitas County between 2020 and 2024. The County's building permit data shows that there are approximately 939 housing units under construction or in the final steps of permitting, this suggests that recent housing construction trends may remain consistent. Assuming the recent housing trends remain consistent through 2046, we can assume approximately 461 units built per year. A buildout of 461 units per year would result in the County exceeding its allocated growth target by approximately 3,594 units. To meet allocated growth targets, there would need to be an average of 281 housing units built per year. Based on identified findings from this Housing Needs Assessment, much of the new housing should be smaller, more affordable housing units, aimed at serving 2- to 3-person households. The Land Capacity Analysis (LCA) of the county's buildable lands will expand on the county's capacity for additional growth and the type of housing that the county has capacity for.

Residential Land Supply

Kittitas County contracted Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. (Kimley-Horn) to prepare a Land Capacity Analysis consistent with the Growth Management Act requirements in RCW 36.70A.115 and WAC 365-196-325. The Land Capacity Analysis was prepared using the adopted methodology developed by Kittitas County. The Land Capacity Analysis reviews existing capacity for population, housing, and employment in the county limits. The objective is to determine whether Kittitas County possesses sufficient land densities and buildable land to accommodate planned growth out to 2046. Overall, the county showed sufficient total capacity for housing, jobs, and population allocations.

House Bill 1220 requires jurisdictions to address the housing needs of people making all incomes as part of their Comprehensive Plan updates. To satisfy these new requirements, an analysis of the County's existing zoning and development regulations was completed to demonstrate that the housing types and quantities that meet the need of each of the Areas Median Income (AMI) brackets is available. The capacity was compared to the housing allocations to each study area in the tables below.



Table 4-2: Residential Capacity by Affordability and Study Area

Household AMI	Housing types	UGA "Study Area"	Zones	% serving AMI	Allocation	Capacity	Surplus (deficit)
0-80% AMI	Apartments, ADUs, Duplexes, Triplexes, most Manufactured/ Mobile/Modular home	Ellensburg UGA	Residential	20%	266	132	631
			Urban Residential	40%		765	
		Cle Elum UGA	Rural 3	20%	6	13	9
			Ag 3	20%		2	
		Kittitas UGA	Urban Residential	40%	6	11	5
		S Cle Elum UGA	Rural 3	20%	6	1	(5)
>80% AMI	Detached Single Family, some manufactured	Ellensburg UGA	Residential	80%	27	527	1,647
			Urban Residential	60%		1148	
		Cle Elum UGA	Rural 3	80%	0	53	60
			Ag 3	80%		7	
		Kittitas UGA	Urban Residential	60%	0	16	16
		S Cle Elum UGA	Rural 3	80%	0	3	3
50-80% AMI	Duplexes, ADUs	Unincorporated Rural County	All rural zones	10%	156	247	91
>80% AMI	Detached single family		All rural zones	90%	1,267	2,227	960
Totals					1,734	5,151	3,417

Table 4-3 provides a summary of these findings from the Land Capacity Analysis. The County's Land Capacity Analysis only studied the unincorporated areas of the county.

Table 4-3: Housing and Population Capacity (2025)

UGA Study Areas*	Unit Capacity	Vacancy Rate	Non-Year-round occupied home rate	Persons Per Household	Population Capacity
Cle Elum	75	6.4%	13.0%	2.06	125
Ellensburg	2,571	6.4%	13.0%	2.73	5,714
Kittitas	27	6.4%	13.0%	3.29	71
Roslyn	0	6.4%	13.0%	5.0	0
South Cle Elum	3	6.4%	13.0%	2.27	6
Non-UGA Study Areas					
Rural County	2,475	6.4%	13.0%	2.19	4,413
Total in Urban Areas	2,676				5,918
Total in Rural Study Areas	2,475				4,413

Source: Kittitas Land Capacity Analysis, 2025

*UGA Study area refer only to the unincorporated UGAs.



4.2.4 City Housing Assessments

There are five incorporated cities in Kittitas County, including Ellensburg, Kittitas, Cle Elum, Town of South Cle Elum, and Roslyn. These cities have designated urban growth areas outside of their current city limits. It is recognized and anticipated that as these cities undergo their own individual comprehensive plan updates, they work concurrently with Kittitas County to accommodate future projected growth and housing needs. Kittitas County intends to work collaboratively with neighboring jurisdictions and incorporated cities to identify and address housing issues as they arise in an appropriately scaled and equitable manner.

4.3 Goals and Policies

Kittitas County has established the following goals to guide future housing development. These goals were developed in response to existing housing conditions and identified needs within the county. Goals are intended to support the County-Wide Planning Policies.

Each goal and policy has been assigned a unique identifier that indicates the element where it is located, specifies whether it is a goal or a policy, and includes a sequential number for organization. For example:

H-G1 = Housing Element, Goal 1

H-P1 = Housing Element, Policy 1

4.3.1 Affordable Housing

H-G1: Support strategies that increase and maintain the availability of affordable housing for all income levels throughout the county.

H-P1: Within urban growth areas, establish development regulations and incentives that provide an equitable supply of housing types, sizes, costs, and densities which are affordable to all economic groups throughout the county.

H-P2: Explore incentives that may reduce costs, reduce timelines, or expand housing types, these may be density incentives, fee reductions, setback reductions, or increased building heights.

H-P3: Coordinate with the City of Ellensburg to promote the development of affordable housing in the Ellensburg UGA.

H-P4: Coordinate with the City of Kittitas to promote the development of affordable housing in the Kittitas UGA.

H-P5: Coordinate with the City of Cle Elum to promote development of affordable housing in the Cle Elum UGA.

H-P6: Coordinate with the City of Ellensburg to expand subsidized housing opportunities in the Ellensburg UGA.



- H-P7: Monitor development patterns around the Ellensburg UGA to reduce the potential for urban sprawl in rural areas.
- H-P8: Encourage home ownership within the community.
- H-P9: Develop criteria for the use of density bonuses for new housing developments that include at least 10% affordable housing within urban growth areas.
- H-P10: Coordinate with other agencies and non-governmental organizations for the use of competitive subsidies and grants.
- H-P11: Support the use of non-profit community housing that will own and lease land and/or structures to homeowners and guarantee permanent affordability of the homes in the event of resale.
- H-P12: Promote a mix of on-site and off-site housing production in and around urban growth areas.

4.3.2 Diverse Housing and Services

- H-G2: Encourage mixed residential and commercial development close to employment opportunities, public transportation, and social and health services within urban growth areas.**
- H-P13: Encourage large employers and educational institutions to support housing options for their employees.
- H-P14: Coordinate with CWU to understand the County's ongoing role in supporting student and workforce housing.
- H-P15: Encourage the development of housing types compatible with workforce and student housing lifestyles.
- H-P16: Allow for the development of accessory dwelling units and cooperative housing (multifamily) within urban growth areas and in mixed-use (commercial/residential) corridors.
- H-P17: Promote a higher density of Residential land uses by implementing innovative residential developments, such as cluster developments, master planned developments, and planned unit developments within urban growth areas.
- H-P18: Identify lands within areas which are served by centralized water and sewer systems, paved streets, and have other public services provided to them which are suitable for higher density residential use, including multifamily and single-family planned unit developments and clustered housing.



- H-P19: Invest in the maintenance and expansion of water, sewer, streets, parks, and fire protection services to adequate service levels in areas designated for higher density residential uses.
- H-P20: Allow multifamily units and accessory dwelling units in mixed-use buildings within commercial zones.
- H-G3: Develop a permit ready Accessory Dwelling Unit program in coordination with the cities to provide more affordable housing options throughout the county.**
- H-P21: Work with the cities through the Kittitas County Conference of Governments to establish a joint permit ready Accessory Dwelling Unit program. Creating a program together will reduce upfront costs of developing a program, long term implementation costs, and it will provide users of the program consistency across jurisdictions.
- H-P22: Create a permit ready Accessory Dwelling Unit to reduce pre-construction costs, reduce permit timelines, and contribute to creating more housing options.

4.3.3 Housing Equity

- H-G4: Provide equitable housing options to allow residents with supported living needs to live as independently as possible throughout the county.**
- H-P23: Promote and pursue grant opportunities to increase the supply and accessibility of housing for special needs populations.
- H-P24: Improve accessibility and public services within areas compatible with group homes, foster homes, and other specialized care facilities.
- H-P25: Consider housing strategies and housing types that support multiple stages of life, increasing opportunities for residents to age in place.

4.3.4 Housing & Growth

- H-G5: Provide a sufficient number of housing units for future populations in rural areas of Kittitas County while maintaining environmental corridors and quality habitats.**
- H-P26: Evaluate the impact of proposed policies and procedures on the cost of developing, preserving, or maintaining of residential units prior to adoption.
- H-P27: Allow use of innovative technology in residential developments which promote sustainable practices and healthy lifestyles.
- H-P28: Promote development regulations that encourage and incentivize design flexibility and pair with other incentives like fast-track processing and fee changes to improve likelihood of housing development as much as possible.



- H-P29: Coordinate with resorts and other partners in upper Kittitas County responsible for outdoor recreation destinations to understand how housing can be located for access to outdoor recreation.
- H-P30: Ensure that programs and projects focused on increasing housing and recreation/tourism opportunities consider long term impacts to the transportation system and how to proactively address those impacts as growth occurs.

4.3.5 Property Preservation

H-G6: Provide for future populations while preserving existing housing stock and balancing property rights.

- H-P31: Adopt Zoning and Development Regulations that support ongoing residential/mixed use development and the preservation or rehabilitation of existing housing stock and established neighborhood character.
- H-P32: Promote the preservation, rehabilitation, and reuse of historic structures for housing and other neighborhood compatible uses.



5 TRANSPORTATION

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Purpose

The Transportation Element aims to provide a 20-year vision for the Kittitas County transportation system, which respects the character of each of its regions, supports anticipated growth, and builds on the county's development as an attractive place to live, work, and play by supporting safe and comfortable travel by all modes through 2045.

The overall vision for Kittitas County's Transportation Element is to provide a safe, balanced, and efficient multi-modal transportation system that serves anticipated local and regional growth. Guidance from County staff and the Policy Working Group helped identify five goals, which serve as the foundation for this Element:

- Safe
- Efficient and Accommodates Growth, but Respects Rural Character
- Complete, Multimodal, and Accommodates Outdoor Recreation
- Leveraged by Active Partnerships
- Sustainably Funded and Maintains What We Have

The project list and estimated costs are included in the Kittitas County Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan, which is updated annually, and additional long-term projects are in the 20-Year Transportation Plan, included in the appendix. The County allocates money for capacity enhancements, including roadway improvement and expansion; bikeways; and trails, and to maintain roadways, bridges, and other infrastructure. In the current 2026 budget more than 25 million is allocated for capital projects and more than 15 million is allocated for county road improvements.

For gaps in funding, a variety of funding strategies are discussed. While the Transportation Element plans for long-term growth over a 20-year period, it is recommended that it be updated every five to ten years considering new policy changes or developments that can affect the transportation system.

To serve as a useful document for the community, including both County staff and the public, the Transportation Element focuses on the County's vision and the projects and programs intended to meet that vision.



5.1.2 Supporting Plans

The Transportation Element acknowledges the alternate policies from other County departments and regional and state partners including, but not limited to:

Six-Year Transportation Capital Improvement Program	2017-2037 QuadCo Regional Transportation Plan
2022 10-Year Transportation Asset Management Plan	2022 Kittitas County Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition
Final Six-Year QuadCo RTPO ¹⁰ Transportation Improvement Plan	2025 Road Safety Improvement Plan
2018 20-Year Transportation Plan	Comprehensive Safety Action Plan Snoqualmie Pass
	2021 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan

5.2 Transportation Network Conditions and Trends

Kittitas County possesses a rich and diverse mix of land uses and destinations that require a specialized Transportation Plan to ensure efficient mobility and accessibility throughout the county. The transportation network accommodates many modes of travel, including walking, bicycling, public transit, and driving. Vehicular travel is still the primary mode for most travelers in and around the county.

Rural roads and highways form the foundation of the transportation framework with roadways connecting the many communities in Kittitas County. Additionally, transit is available within the city of Ellensburg. The incorporated cities have relatively well-connected street grids, while rural roadways with more limited pedestrian amenities characterize the remaining areas of the county.

5.2.1 Land Uses and Key Destinations

The following section identifies key destinations within Kittitas County that serve as important focal points for transportation planning. Each destination is listed below with a brief description, and for some locations, traffic volume data is provided to illustrate current travel patterns. As part of the 2025 Periodic Update, Kittitas County is not considering any significant land use changes. This means that, for traffic and transportation planning purposes, the same key destinations identified here are expected to remain critical for the next 10–20 years as the county continues to experience population growth.

¹⁰ Quad County Regional Transportation Planning Organization



Snoqualmie Pass Ski Resort

Snoqualmie Pass Ski Resort is a major winter recreation destination located at the western edge of Kittitas County. Renowned for its accessible slopes, snowboarding terrain, and family-friendly amenities, the resort draws thousands of visitors from across Washington State and beyond each year. Its proximity to Seattle and the Puget Sound region makes it especially popular with tourists seeking day trips or weekend getaways. The resort's appeal is heightened by its variety of runs, ski schools, and vibrant après-ski scene, making it a central hub for winter tourism in the county.

Lake Easton State Park

Lake Easton State Park offers year-round outdoor recreation, including camping, fishing, boating, hiking, and picnicking. Nestled in the Cascade foothills, the park's scenic lake and forested surroundings attract both local residents and visitors from neighboring counties and metropolitan areas. Its convenient location near Interstate 90 makes it a popular stop for travelers and tourists seeking a natural retreat, especially during the summer months when the park's campsites and trails are in high demand.

Suncadia Resort

Suncadia Resort is a luxury mountain resort and residential community near Cle Elum, featuring upscale lodging, golf courses, a spa, and extensive outdoor activities. The resort is a magnet for tourists, vacationers, and second-home owners from the Seattle area and beyond, offering a blend of relaxation and adventure in a picturesque setting. Suncadia's event spaces, restaurants, and recreational amenities make it a year-round destination for weddings, conferences, and family vacations, significantly contributing to the county's tourism economy.

Bowers Field Airport (ELN)

Bowers Field Airport, located in Ellensburg, serves as a regional aviation hub for general aviation, flight training, and air service. While it primarily supports local transportation and business needs, the airport also attracts students and aviation enthusiasts from outside the county, especially those attending CWU's aviation program. Bowers Field plays a key role in connecting Kittitas County to broader regional and national networks, supporting both economic development and educational opportunities.

Central Washington University

CWU in Ellensburg is a major educational institution that draws thousands of students, faculty, and visitors from across Washington State and beyond. The university's academic programs, cultural events, and athletic competitions make it a vibrant center of activity, with a significant portion of its population coming from outside Kittitas County. CWU's presence boosts local businesses and fosters a diverse, dynamic community, making Ellensburg a destination for higher education and student life.



Kittitas Valley Event Center (Rodeo and Fairgrounds)

The Kittitas Valley Event Center hosts the annual Kittitas County Fair and Ellensburg Rodeo, one of the largest and most celebrated rodeos in the Pacific Northwest. These events attract thousands of spectators, competitors, and vendors from outside of the county, creating a festive atmosphere and showcasing local culture and heritage. Throughout the year, the event center also hosts trade shows, concerts, and community gatherings, serving as a focal point for tourism and entertainment in the region.

River and Recreation Across the County

Kittitas County is renowned for its rivers, including the Yakima River, which offer abundant opportunities for fishing, rafting, kayaking, and wildlife viewing. These natural assets attract outdoor enthusiasts, anglers, and adventure seekers from across the state and beyond, especially during the warmer months. The county's diverse landscapes—ranging from mountain streams to open valleys—make it a prime destination for recreation, drawing visitors who contribute to the local economy and enjoy the area's scenic beauty.

Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest

The Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, accessed via State Route 903 and Salmon La Sac Road in northern Kittitas County, is a major recreational destination and high-traffic corridor that plays a key role in the County's Transportation and Land Use planning. This area attracts a wide range of users, including hikers, campers, recreational vehicle (RV) travelers, anglers, kayakers, snowmobilers, and winter sports enthusiasts, as well as tourists seeking scenic drives. Seasonal traffic volumes peak during summer weekends and holidays, with additional winter activity from snow-based recreation, making this corridor a critical consideration for Long-Term Transportation Planning as demand is expected to remain strong over the next 10–20 years.

Teanaway River Area and Teanaway Road

The Teanaway River corridor, accessed primarily via Teanaway Road in northern Kittitas County, is a popular destination that generates high seasonal traffic volumes due to its diverse recreational opportunities and scenic character. This area attracts hikers, campers, anglers, and day-use visitors seeking river access, as well as dispersed campers and equestrian users drawn to the surrounding forest and trail systems. Summer weekends and holidays see the greatest congestion, with vehicles lining narrow road shoulders near trailheads and river pullouts, while fall brings hunters and continued outdoor activity. The combination of limited roadway capacity, dispersed recreation sites, and growing popularity makes the Teanaway River area a critical consideration for Transportation Planning and Land Use Policy as demand is expected to remain strong over the next 10–20 years.



5.2.2 Safety

Kittitas County is committed to creating safer roads for all and proudly supports Washington State's Target Zero initiative, which seeks to eliminate all traffic fatalities and serious injuries on public roadways by 2030. This commitment is demonstrated through the County's Road Safety Improvement Plan, recently updated in 2025, and the new Safety Action Plan

Kittitas County updated the Road Safety Plan 2025 as a continuation of a biennial road safety plan program created to reduce collisions within the County Road network. Following WSDOT's Highway Safety Improvement Plan (HSIP), grant application methodology for creating a prioritized road safety plan, crash data analysis in combination with staff identification of certain roadway characteristics throughout the County Road network, a list of prioritized projects implementing various countermeasures was created. These projects were further prioritized with engineering judgement using considerations such as estimated project cost, feasibility, and improvement timing. Total project costs were also determined, accumulated, and if needed, broken down in phases to be completed as funding opportunity allows.

Types of collisions, number of crashes and percentages of crashes for Kittitas County, all counties-county maintained roads, and all public roads.

Table 5-1: WSDOT and Kittitas County Crash Data

	Kittitas County		All Counties-Co. Maintained Roads		All Public Roads (Washington State)	
Type of Collision	Number of Crashes	Percent of Crashes	Number of Crashes	Percent of Crashes	Number of Crashes	Percent of Crashes
Number of Fatal Collisions	6	21%	802	23.80%	3070	19.87%
Number of Serious Injury Collisions	23	79%	2760	76.20%	12378	80.13%
Number of Alcohol-Related Collisions	8	28%	557	20.20%	2544	16.47%
Total Number of Fatalities	7	24%	847	23.78%	3317	21.47%
Total Number of Collisions*	647		65814		509329	
Total Number of Injuries**	213		22112		150739	

* Includes fatal and non-fatal

** Includes serious and non-serious

The 2019 - 2023 WSDOT Crash Data Report provided collision data was further evaluated to determine the predominant crash types, contributing factors, and specific locations. As shown in **Table 5-2** below, the predominant causes of fatal and serious injury collisions in Kittitas County are "hitting a fixed object" and "overturning." Crashes involving fixed-object hazards, or non-traversable roadside slopes within clear zone accounted for 62.07% of all fatal and serious injury collisions. Additionally, 13.79% of the fatal and serious injury collisions were caused by vehicles overturning. Unprotected roadside slopes steeper than 3Horizontal:1Vertical are considered non-traversable and contribute to overturning accidents. The



predominant conditions where fatal and serious injury collisions occurred included higher speed roadways with low lighting conditions, and where roadway curvature was a factor. This accident data seems consistent for a county like Kittitas where most of the roadway network is rural without lighting features.

Accidents tend to be more severe when speeds are higher and where low light conditions hinder driver acuity, especially in horizontal curves where drivers are more likely to leave the roadway. Non-intersection related collisions accounted for 68.97% of the fatal and serious injury collisions, although a large proportion of total accidents (non-injury, serious injury, and fatal) occurred at intersections and main corridors leading to potential for more serious accidents at these locations. The full 2025 Road Safety Improvement Plan is available on the Kittitas County website.

Table 5-2: Crash Data for Fatal and Serious Injury Collision by Jurisdiction and Collision.

Type of Collision	Number of Crashes (Kittitas County)	Percent of Crashes (Kittitas County)	Number of Crashes (All Counties-Co. Maintained Roads)	Percent of Crashes (All Counties-Co. Maintained Roads)	Number of Crashes (All Public Roads - WA State)	Percent of Crashes (All Public Roads - WA State)
Hit Fixed Object - Roadway Ditch	6	33.33%	255	17.77%	524	12.48%
Hit Fixed Object - Tree/Stump (Stationary)	3	16.67%	315	21.95%	746	17.76%
Hit Fixed Object - Fence	2	11.11%	109	7.60%	243	5.79%
Hit Fixed Object - Earth Bank	1	5.56%	155	10.80%	351	8.36%
Hit Fixed Object - Over Embankment	3	16.67%	137	9.55%	334	7.95%
Hit Fixed Object - Boulder (Stationary)	1	5.56%	26	1.81%	62	1.48%
Hit Fixed Object - Utility Box	1	5.56%	9	0.63%	29	0.69%
Hit Fixed Object - Snow Bank	1	5.56%	3	0.21%	9	0.21%
Other	0	0.00%	426	29.69%	1903	45.31%
Total Hit Fixed Object	18	62.07%	1435	42.49%	4200	27.78%
Total Overturn	4	22.22%	116	11.57%	958	22.81%
Total Light Condition	29		3373		15108	
Daylight	18	62.07%	1836	54.43%	8023	53.10%
Dark-Street Lights On	0	0.00%	939	27.84%	3707	24.54%



Type of Collision	Number of Crashes (Kittitas County)	Percent of Crashes (Kittitas County)	Number of Crashes (All Counties-Co. Maintained Roads)	Percent of Crashes (All Counties-Co. Maintained Roads)	Number of Crashes (All Public Roads - WA State)	Percent of Crashes (All Public Roads - WA State)
Dark-No Street Lights	10	34.48%	316	9.37%	2317	15.34%
Dusk	0	0.00%	134	3.97%	491	3.25%
Dawn	1	3.45%	70	2.08%	246	1.63%
Dark - Unknown Lighting	0	0.00%	39	1.16%	169	1.09%
Dark-Street Lights Off	0	0.00%	23	0.68%	100	0.66%
Unknown	0	0.00%	10	0.44%	44	0.44%
Other						
Non-Intersection - Not Related	20	68.97%	2244	66.45%	8546	56.52%
At Intersection and Related	5	17.24%	715	21.47%	4501	29.77%
Road Curvature - Horizontal Curve	10	37.04%	1106	35.53%	3382	24.21%
Motorcycle			749	10.76%	3142	9.26%
Posted Speed Limit at 50 mph	38	63.33%	1511	24.29%	3188	11.75%

Safety Action Plan

Kittitas County is in the process of adopting a Comprehensive Safety Action Plan for Snoqualmie Pass. The plan identifies priority locations where targeted safety and mobility improvements are recommended. These improvements, called countermeasures, are based on evidence and tailored to address site-specific safety concerns. Within the study area, seven priority locations were identified for improvement. Selection was informed by collision patterns, traffic volumes, community feedback, and engineering judgment. The goal is to implement coordinated, context-sensitive strategies that enhance roadway safety and mobility for all users.

A safety countermeasure is defined as an evidence-based strategy or treatment aimed at reducing the frequency and severity of traffic crashes. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) promotes Proven Safety Countermeasures—research-backed designs and practices that mitigate crash risks and reduce serious injuries and fatalities. The term “countermeasure” is used instead of “solution” because safety risks cannot be eliminated entirely; these measures reduce risk and support a Safe System Approach to roadway safety.



5.2.3 Auto Network

Kittitas County's auto-transportation network is organized into a hierarchy of roadway types, each serving a specific role in how residents travel, commute, and access services.

Interstate Facilities

At the top of the hierarchy is Interstate 90, a major east-west corridor that enables fast, high-capacity travel across the county and connects residents to destinations throughout Washington State. Interstate 82 is a north-south corridor that runs from central Kittitas County, near the City of Ellensburg, to Yakima Valley. These facilities are essential for long-distance commuting, freight movement, and access to urban centers such as Seattle and Spokane. Interstate facilities are owned and operated by WSDOT.

Other Freeway/Expressway Facilities

Supplementing the interstates are other freeway and expressway routes, designed for high-speed, limited-access travel. These roads help residents move efficiently between key destinations, reduce congestion, and provide alternative routes for through-traffic and emergency detours.

Principal Arterials

Principal arterials, such as State Route 97 and State Route 10, are vital for connecting cities and towns like Ellensburg, Cle Elum, and Roslyn. These roads carry higher traffic volumes and are crucial for daily commuting, school transportation, and access to major activity centers, hospitals, and shopping districts.

Minor Arterials

Minor arterials serve as feeders to principal arterials and expressways, linking smaller communities and neighborhoods to the broader network. These roads support local traffic and provide alternative routes during peak travel times, helping residents reach schools, parks, and local businesses.

Major Collectors

Major collectors gather traffic from local roads and funnel it to arterials. These facilities connect rural areas, agricultural zones, and residential developments to urban centers, making it easier for residents to access essential services, shopping, and employment opportunities.

Minor Collectors

Minor collectors serve local traffic, connecting neighborhoods, rural communities, and recreational areas to the major collector and arterial network. These roads are important for short trips, school bus routes, and access to parks, trailheads, and community facilities.



Local Access Roads

Local roads primarily serve residential areas, rural properties, and small community destinations, providing direct access to homes, farms, and local businesses. These roads typically accommodate short trips at lower speeds, generally ranging from 20 to 35 miles per hour (mph), and are used by passenger vehicles, school buses, delivery trucks, and occasional agricultural equipment. Local roads often connect to minor collectors, supporting access to parks, trailheads, and neighborhood facilities, but are not intended for heavy through-traffic or high volumes.

Proposed Facilities

In addition to existing roads, there are proposed upgrades and new facilities in each functional class. These planned improvements aim to enhance connectivity, safety, and capacity, accommodating future growth and changing transportation needs for county residents.

5.2.4 Pedestrian and Bicycle Network

Provision of facilities for walking and biking is essential to providing a functional, multimodal transportation system that accommodates all users.

Most of the highly walkable areas in Kittitas County are in incorporated downtowns: Ellensburg, Cle Elum, and Roslyn all enjoy walkable downtowns with at least partial sidewalk coverage. South Cle Elum, Kittitas, and many of the unincorporated towns have significant sidewalk deficiencies that make walking and biking more difficult. Many rural routes lack facilities like sidewalks and wide shoulders altogether, and County ordinance allows speeds up to 50 mph on rural routes unless otherwise signed. High-speed roadways without separate nonmotorized facilities make walking and biking uncomfortable and less safe.

Countywide, biking is accommodated on trails and on shoulders along rural roadways. The scenic Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail (FKA John Wayne Pioneer Trail), Coal Mines Trail, and routes in the recreation areas provide bicycle access and connectivity throughout the county. Moreover, the County's Recreation, Parks, Open Space Plan identifies multiple locations for future trail improvements.

5.2.5 Transit Network

The city of Ellensburg is the only location in Kittitas County with regular intracity transit service. The existing Central Transit service is a collaboration between the City, CWU, and HopeSource, a Community Action Agency in Ellensburg. Central Transit logged over 100,000 one-way boardings in 2024, with more than 14,000 dial a rides, and 6,609 Kittitas County Connector services¹¹.

In addition to the Central Transit service, Ellensburg is also served by the Yakima-Ellensburg Commuter operated by Yakima Transit. As of 2025, the Kittitas County Connector provides free rides between

¹¹ Central Transit. 2025–2030 Transit Development Plan and Annual Report. October 2025.



Kittitas, Ellensburg, Cle Elum, Ronald, and Roslyn seven days a week. The Connector is operated by HopeSource.

For connections outside of the county, Greyhound has a service with a stop in Ellensburg, the Apple Line bus travels north into Chelan and Okanogan counties, and the Bellair private charter bus takes residents to and from SeaTac Airport. Grant County provides carpool vans but no fixed route or on-demand services.

5.2.6 Community Access and Healthy Lifestyles

Kittitas County offers a remarkably diverse array of outdoor recreation opportunities, supported by a mix of public lands, private lands (with some access agreements), and a well-developed infrastructure of trails, parks, campgrounds, and water access points. The county's geography—ranging from the Cascade foothills and river canyons to sagebrush steppe and alpine forests—creates a landscape rich in both year-round and seasonal activities for residents and visitors.

Motorized Trails and Off-Road Access

Four-wheel drive (4WD) and all-terrain vehicle (ATV) Trails: Extensive networks in areas like Taneum-Manastash, Cle Elum Valley, and Swauk/Table Mountain provide access for off-road vehicles, connecting forest roads, ridgelines, and historic mining sites. These trails are popular with locals and attract enthusiasts from across the region.

Snowmobiling: Groomed and ungroomed snowmobile routes traverse the county, with designated Sno-Parks (e.g., Crystal Springs, Cabin Creek, Salmon la Sac) serving as access points. Routes connect valleys, ridges, and mountain passes, offering both beginner and expert terrain.

Non-Motorized Trails

Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail Snoqualmie Pass to the Columbia River

The Central section of the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail (also known as the "PTCT") begins at the Snoqualmie Tunnel and goes east through Ellensburg, continuing over the Columbia River on the recently renovated Beverly Bridge. The Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail gives hikers, cyclists, and equestrians an unconventional way to explore a variety of environments, flora, and wildlife. Explore the forested Cascade Mountains to the arid shrub-steppe of eastern Washington¹².

Hiking and Interpretive Trails: Hundreds of miles of trails cross public lands, including Iron Horse State Park/John Wayne Trail (a multi-use rail trail), the Coal Mines Trail, and numerous routes in the Colockum, L.T. Murray, and Wenas Wildlife Areas. Trails range from short interpretive walks to challenging alpine hikes, with access points in towns and at trailheads along major roads.

¹² Washington State Parks. "Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail West." Accessed January 22, 2026. <https://parks.wa.gov/find-parks/state-parks/palouse-cascades-state-park-trail-west>.



Mountain Biking: Trails for mountain biking are found near Ellensburg, in the Teanaway and Manastash areas, and along the Iron Horse State Park corridor. Easements and trail-building projects continue to expand access.

Cross Country Skiing: Winter brings groomed and backcountry ski trails, with popular areas at Cabin Creek, Lake Easton State Park, and Blewett Pass. Clubs and state agencies maintain trails for all skill levels.

Water-Based Recreation

Boating and Fishing: Numerous boat launches are located on the Yakima River, Lake Cle Elum, Lake Easton, Columbia River, and other bodies of water. Access points range from developed ramps with parking and restrooms to informal gravel launches. Fishing is popular in rivers, lakes, and ponds, with some areas managed for fly fishing and others for general angling.

Rafting and Kayaking: The Yakima River and its tributaries offer opportunities for rafting and kayaking, with signage and safety improvements proposed for popular stretches.

Camping and Overnight Access

Campgrounds: Over 30 campgrounds are distributed across the county, from large state parks (Lake Easton, Gingko Petrified Forest) to small Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management sites. Amenities vary from primitive tent sites to full-service RV hookups, with some campgrounds catering specifically to equestrian users.

Horse Campgrounds: Specialized horse camps (e.g., Cayuse, Haney Meadows) provide corrals, loading ramps, and water access for riders.

Wildlife and Nature Viewing

Birdwatching and Wildlife Viewing: Designated Important Bird Areas (Colockum, Quilomene, Yakima Canyon, Umtanum Creek) and local parks (Helen McCabe, Irene Rinehart) offer prime viewing for migratory birds, raptors, and elk. Viewing blinds, interpretive trails, and annual events support access for enthusiasts.

Butterfly and Botanical Viewing: Specific roads and meadows (Durr Road, Reecer Creek Canyon, Schnebly Coulee) are noted for butterfly habitat and wildflower viewing.

Winter Sports

Skiing and Snowshoeing: In addition to cross-country skiing, the county is home to downhill ski areas (Snoqualmie Pass, Summit at Snoqualmie) and snowshoe trails. Sno-Parks provide access for sledding, snowmobiling, and dog sledding.

Dog Sledding: Routes are mapped in the Teanaway Valley, Lake Easton, and Crystal Springs areas, with proposals for expanded trail systems.



Parks, Open Spaces, and Special Facilities

City and County Parks: Urban parks in Ellensburg, Cle Elum, Roslyn, and South Cle Elum offer playgrounds, sports fields, picnic areas, and swimming pools. Larger parks (Irene Rinehart, Centennial, Olmstead State Park) provide trails, water access, and wildlife habitat.

Open Spaces and Natural Areas: Watersheds, wildlife refuges, and undeveloped parcels (e.g., Central Washington Park, Paul Rogers Wildlife Refuge) preserve habitat and offer passive recreation.

Special Recreation Facilities: The Kittitas Valley Event Center (Fairgrounds and Rodeo), Memorial Pool and Fitness Center, racquet and recreation centers, and senior/youth centers provide year-round indoor and outdoor recreation.

Adventure and Specialized Activities

Hang Gliding/Paragliding: Launch and landing sites are established at Mount Baldy and other locations, with access agreements in place.

Rock Hounding: Multiple sites (Crystal Mountain, Red Top, Quartz Mountain) are open for collecting agates, jaspers, and geodes.

Horseback Riding: Trails and campgrounds support equestrian access throughout the county, with ongoing efforts to expand trail connections and amenities.

Accessibility and Inclusivity

Handicap Accessible Roads and Trails: Select hunting areas and trails are managed for handicap access, with road entry programs and accessible facilities at parks and trailheads.

5.2.7 Freight Network and Agricultural Routes

Freight and goods movement is a vital and often underappreciated component of the transportation network. Everyone is directly impacted by how goods are delivered to ports, distribution centers, stores, and homes. Freight movement is essential in Kittitas County to bring goods to citizens as well as to export products such as the world-famous timothy hay grown in Kittitas County.

Kittitas County is home to several key freight-generating and time-sensitive industries, including agriculture and forestry. Providing a transportation system that accommodates these key economic generators, and the timely movement of goods is important to Kittitas County.

WSDOT has identified the state's major truck corridors. They rank the corridors by the amount of goods that they carry each year, measured in gross tons annually. The region is also bisected by a major railroad corridor carrying over five million tons of goods each year. These freight modes are major economic drivers in the region, both as customers to the businesses along the routes and as providers of goods movement for producers and growers in the county.



5.2.8 Bowers Field Airport (ELN)

Bowers Field (ELN) is the largest airport in Kittitas County and is located just north of Ellensburg. Home to the CWU Flight training program, it provides regional connections for tourism, emergency medical services, and firefighting operations. In 2020, it supported 214 jobs and \$39.5 million in regional economic activity.¹³

Bowers Field is planning for significant capital construction over the next six years to better serve small jet aircraft and increase economic development opportunities.

5.3 Levels of Service

5.3.1 Multi-Modal Levels of Service

Roads in Kittitas County serve different travel purposes, and the modal networks therefore prioritize a different balance of users on each corridor. Determining how the entire transportation network fits together in Kittitas County requires identifying desirable routes for each mode, combining them to locate overlaps, and then identifying infrastructure enhancements to ensure safe and complete facilities for all modes. The following sections review the priority networks for each mode and establish their level of service standards.

5.3.2 Auto

With many Kittitas County residents and employees relying on vehicles as their primary mode of transportation, the county's roadway network is critical to the transportation system. Growth within the region has increased the strain on the roadway network, both in terms of traffic congestion and wear and tear. Growth is also concentrated in already developed areas of the county due to limited water availability in many areas.

Most of the congestion in Kittitas County occurs in the urban areas or at certain times of the year – near ski resorts in winter or routes accessing the lakes in the summer. Heavy seasonal congestion on the major interstates and state routes can lead to traffic diverting onto local county roads. This poses both safety risks and delays for residents and increases the maintenance burden on the County.

The Growth Management Act requires that the Transportation Element supports the land uses envisioned in the Comprehensive Plan. Thus, an important component of this Plan was forecasting how the future land uses envisioned in the county, as well as regional growth, would influence demand on Kittitas County's transportation network.

Based on growth estimates from Kittitas County Council of Governments, the County is preparing for 14,153 new residents and 5,051 new workers between 2020-2045. The County then allocated growth

¹³ WSDOT. 2012. "Airport Economic Profile". <https://www.wsdot.wa.gov/NR/rdonlyres/A3DF6FC9-CB27-4CBD-BAA4-31F26BC08896/0/2012BowersField.pdf>



throughout the region based on adopted zoning, observed development patterns, and other County policies.

Analysis was conducted on 45 segments of interstate, arterial, and collector roadways throughout the county. Roadway segment operations were evaluated and assigned a level of service (LOS) grade based on their operations in terms of a ratio of PM peak hour traffic volumes to the roadway segment's capacity. In Kittitas County, the standard for a roadway to be considered "acceptable" is LOS C for rural roads and LOS D for roads within urban growth boundaries.

Based on this analysis, only one segment is expected to exceed LOS standards during the 20-year planning horizon – Bowers Road, located just to the north of Ellensburg, is projected to be at LOS E by 2038. This section is within the urban growth area boundary in an area of rapid development. A future planned project to connect Bowers Road to Look Road would bring this section back into compliance with the County's LOS standards and is included in the project list. Detailed LOS results and methodology can be found in the 2018- 2038 Kittitas County Long-Range Transportation Plan.

Based on the regional demand and the forecasted traffic volume, all other county roadways should be able to accommodate anticipated local and regional growth over the next 20 years. Nevertheless, the County should monitor key segments especially near freeway interchanges, proposed new commercial and residential developments, and potential bottleneck locations to maintain an efficient roadway network.

5.3.3 Walking

Walking is the most fundamental transportation mode of all since virtually all trips include a walking component. Effective pedestrian facilities enable community building and social equity. While many of the county's roads do not need fully separate sidewalks or paths due to the lack of destinations in close proximity in rural areas, arterials and collectors in the urban growth areas and limited areas of more intensive rural development may warrant dedicated pedestrian infrastructure.

Figure 5-1: Pedestrian Accommodation Description for Roadways within the UGA and LAMIRDs

LOS	Description
	Improved network of paved trails that are ADA accessible and have marked wayfinding signage and milepost markers.
	Maintain existing sidewalk and pedestrian facility provided on one side of the street.
	No pedestrian facility or existing facilities allowed to decay.



The County is required by federal guidelines to establish an ADA Transition Plan. The most recent ADA Transition Plan was adopted in 2022.

Figure 5-2: Pedestrian Accommodation Descriptions for Roadways Outside of the UGA and LAMIRDs

LOS	Description
	Improved network of pedestrian facilities from what exists today.
	Maintain existing sidewalk and pedestrian facilities.
	No maintenance of existing facilities, allowed to decay.

Figure 5-1 and **Figure 5-2** establish guidance in terms of the level of accommodation that the County wishes to provide for pedestrians. **Figure 5-1** applies to the urban growth areas and limited areas of more intensive rural development, where pedestrian demands warrant special attention. **Figure 5-2** applies to unincorporated areas outside of the urban growth areas and limited areas of more intensive rural development, where pedestrian demands are considerably lower.

5.3.4 Bicycling

The cities within the county already offer recreational bicycling options on the various trails spanning its length, such as the Coal Mine Trail and Palouse to Cascade State Park Trail (FKA John Wayne Trail). Connecting to these routes from other areas of the county can be challenging, however, due to the lack of bicycle infrastructure. Bicyclists can share the road with motorists but at high speeds, lack of paved shoulders, and lack of separation from auto traffic can be a deterrent. **Figure 5-3** establishes guidance in terms of the level of accommodation that the County wishes to provide for bicycles.

Figure 5-3: Bicycle Accommodation Descriptions

LOS	Description
	Installation of facilities that provide more separation from vehicle traffic.
	Maintain existing bicycle infrastructure and support city and regional entities in implementing improvements.
	No maintenance of existing bicycle facilities, allowed to decay.



5.3.5 Transit

Transit operations are not dictated by the County, but it can still create an environment that is welcoming to transit. The County will work with Central Transit to assist with transportation accommodations for planned service expansions and identify areas where additional or future service or improvements are needed. **Figure 5-4** provides guidance for the County's level of accommodation for transit.

Figure 5-4: Transit Accommodation Descriptions

LOS	Description
	Work with transit to accommodate access to transit service expansion.
	Work with transit to maintain existing transit service.
	Failure to partner with transit operator.

5.3.6 Freight & Auto

Most trips in Kittitas County occur along its roadway network, which serves as the backbone for accessing homes, jobs, and other destinations. Many of these routes are rural, however, and do not see significant traffic volumes throughout the day. Similarly, goods movement and delivery vehicles use some corridors frequently while other roads see only the occasional local delivery.

The 2018-2038 Kittitas County Long-Range Transportation Plan calls out the functional classification of each of Kittitas County's roads, in terms of whether it is an arterial, collector, or local road. These classes indicate the level of priority of each road for automobiles, specifically in terms of facilitating vehicle and freight mobility as well as other modes. The detailed figures in the 2018-2038 Kittitas County Long-Range Transportation Plan show potential future road extensions, which may be completed over time as development occurs.

The Long-Range Transportation Plan also identifies the major WSDOT freight corridors that support goods movement. These classifications indicate the annual weight of goods that travel in a corridor, whether via large trailer loads or smaller delivery vehicles. The functional classification and freight class of a road should guide future investments in streetscape to ensure that roads can carry appropriate freight loads.



Kittitas County will maintain its current LOS standards of LOS C for rural roads and LOS D for roads within urban growth boundaries. Of the 45 road segments analyzed, all currently meet the County's LOS standard.

5.4 System Needs and Deficiencies

5.4.1 Safety deficiencies, high-risk corridors, and rural safety concerns

Kittitas County faces persistent safety challenges, particularly along high-risk corridors where run-off-the-road crashes, collisions with fixed objects, and vehicle overturns are disproportionately common. Rural roads often lack lighting, clear zones, and protective barriers, increasing the severity of accidents.

Seasonal traffic and tourism congestion impacts

Seasonal spikes in traffic, driven by tourism, recreation, and special events, place additional strain on the county's roadways and transportation systems. Popular destinations such as Snoqualmie Pass, Suncadia Resort, and Lake Easton State Park experience congestion, parking shortages, and delays during peak periods. These impacts can reduce safety, hinder emergency response, and affect the quality of life for both residents and visitors. This is helped by the recently drafted Comprehensive Safety Action Plan for Snoqualmie Pass. However, the County continues efforts in monitoring and planning and adjusting levels of service to respond to seasonal shifts throughout the year.

System preservation needs (roadway, bridges, pavement conditions)

The county's transportation infrastructure requires ongoing investment in preservation, with many roadways and bridges showing signs of aging and wear. Pavement deterioration, bridge rail deficiencies, and outdated structures are prevalent, especially in rural areas and on secondary routes. Deferred maintenance and limited funding have led to a backlog of repairs, raising concerns about long-term reliability, safety, and the ability to support increasing traffic volumes. Moving forward, it will be important to include new analysis of existing facilities against potential climate-exacerbated hazards which may impact prioritization project improvements. The initial vulnerability assessment completed in 2025 for the periodic update identified roads as high-risk vulnerability against potential flooding throughout the county.

Active transportation gaps and network connectivity issues

The County largely owns and operates rural roads that are shared with residential and agricultural uses. However, there are gaps in the active transportation network, including missing sidewalks, bike lanes, and safe crossings within urban growth areas. Connectivity between communities, schools, parks, and key destinations is limited, making walking and cycling less practical and safe for residents. Rural and suburban areas are especially affected, with few continuous routes and barriers such as highways and rivers impeding non-motorized travel.



Transit access challenges, especially for vulnerable populations

The County does not own or operate any transit operations. Nonetheless, public transit options are limited to the Ellensburg UGA, with infrequent service and coverage gaps that disproportionately affect seniors, students, low-income residents, and those without access to private vehicles. Rural communities and outlying neighborhoods lack reliable connections to employment centers, healthcare, and essential services, creating mobility barriers and increasing social isolation for vulnerable populations.

5.5 Goals and Policies

Kittitas County has established five goals to accomplish its overall vision for transportation in the future. The goals establish overarching priorities that serve the vision of the Transportation Element while policies lay out specific actions.

Each goal and policy has been assigned a unique identifier that indicates the element where it is located, specifies whether it is a goal or a policy, and includes a sequential number for organization. For example:

T-G1 = Transportation Element, Goal 1

T-P1 = Transportation Element, Policy 1

Together, the goals and policies lay the foundation for the remainder of this Element, including the proposed project list and ongoing implementation of the Element.

5.5.1 Safe

T-G1: Create a transportation network that can be shared safely by all users and provides sufficient access for emergency response.

T-P1: Require new development to provide multiple access points that are designed to support emergency access and evacuation.

T-P2: Develop or update the existing evacuation plan that is interagency, ties specific transportation route designations to a countywide and regionally based system of emergency traffic routes, and identifies evacuation centers that accommodate people, pets, and livestock.

T-P3: Develop and maintain a safe, efficient, and environmentally sound multi-modal transportation system in accordance with local, state, and federal requirements.

T-P4: Provide all weather, all-season use of the road system for the movement of goods and services.

T-P5: Develop road standards that incorporate traffic calming techniques that are appropriate for the roadway and surrounding land use.



- T-P6: Implement safety improvements in areas with high accident locations, prioritizing those locations with pedestrian or ATV collisions.
- T-P7: Seek program funds for implementing investments identified in the countywide Safety Plan.
- T-P8: Encourage new development to provide safe transportation alternatives.
- T-P9: Consider the potential impacts of climate exacerbated hazards, like drought, extreme heat, and extreme precipitation, in transportation projects.

5.5.2 Efficient and Accommodates Growth

- T-G2:** **Provide a transportation system network that works hand-in-hand with existing and planned land uses, supports farm-to-market and recreational tourism needs, but respects the rural character and wildlife that residents cherish.**
- T-P10: Ensure an efficient regional system of roads that is functional, safe, accommodates evacuation, and is consistent with adopted County policy and local comprehensive plans.
- T-P11: Encourage the development and implementation of transportation demand management programs appropriate for the various communities in the county.
- T-P12: Develop and implement a concurrency management system, which identifies existing deficiencies and funded improvements to maintain an adopted level of service standards.
- T-P13: Build and maintain a modern transportation network that expands and grows with the needs of its growing population.
- T-P14: Identify transportation corridors to be preserved as part of the overall transportation plan by requiring right-of-way dedication or easements as part of development approval, and by acquiring right-of-way for future needs.
- T-P15: Maintain LOS "C" in rural areas and "D" in county urban areas as measured during the peak hour for roadway segments along segments that are classified as collectors or higher.

5.5.3 Network

- T-G3:** **Provide a transportation system with a hierarchy of roads, with distinct purposes, forming a complete network.**
- T-P16: Encourage a grid system in the urban growth areas where practical.



5.5.4 Land Use

T-G4: **Evaluate and plan for regional facility improvements, including the QuadCo Regional Transportation, that may impact the county road system.**

T-P17: Evaluate the merits of a proposed land use action against the potential impacts on the transportation system by reviewing development proposals for potential impacts to the transportation system and requiring developments to identify and mitigate their transportation impacts through State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) or other local regulatory reviews and County permits or actions.

T-P18: Provide a transportation system that corresponds to and is consistent with patterns of land development and which provides access to and from population centers and recreational opportunities identified in the comprehensive plans in accordance with adopted land use plans.

T-P19: Encourage land use development patterns and investments which reduce the demands on the roadway network.

T-P20: If probable funding falls short, coordinate with cities to revise regional growth efforts and adjust land use designations and zoning.

5.5.5 Farm to Market

T-G5: **Encourage opportunities for the County to explore rail transportation.**

T-P21: Identify, designate, and protect agriculture transportation corridors that facilitate farm use.

T-P22: Coordinate with the agricultural industry and farmers to understand future transportation needs.

5.5.6 Wildlife

T-G6: **Consider refinements to roadway plans and design standards to minimize impacts on wildlife.**

T-P23: Where appropriate, new roadways should consider incorporating wildlife friendly design features.

5.5.7 Complete, Multimodal

T-G7: **Provide a complete multi-modal network for communities that support rural lifestyles and outdoor recreation.**

T-P24: Fill gaps in the system to accommodate safe and enjoyable travel by those choosing to walk, bike, or use transit, including recreational users.



- T-P25: Consider alternative modes when reviewing development applications, incorporate multiple modes into transportation improvement projects, and establish development standards to support the use of alternative transportation modes.
- T-P26: Develop a variety of performance measures to evaluate the multi-modal transportation system and prioritize improvements.
- T-P27: Work with WSDOT, transit, and local agencies to develop park-and-ride, park-and-pool, and express transit service where the need for such facilities has been identified.
- T-P28: Consider establishing level of service for modes of transportation including buses, bicycles, trail systems, and walking paths operated by the County which connect recreation and tourism areas with residential and employment centers.

5.5.8 Active Transportation

- T-G8:** **Enhance active transportation networks that connect rural communities, urban growth areas, and outdoor recreation and promote healthy lifestyles.**
- T-P29: Public Works will work to identify and evaluate high priority active transportation corridors and on-road bike networks, coordinating efforts with adjacent projects and maintenance.
- T-P30: Encourage the expansion and use of active transportation by constructing and maintaining safe, efficient, and pleasant streets for pedestrian and bicycle use.
- T-P31: Identify communities lacking active transportation facilities based on existing facilities, demographics, historic distribution, and exposure to climate-exacerbated hazards to help address inequity and build community resilience.

5.5.9 Recreation

- T-G9:** **Promote and support recreational activities throughout the county by providing adequate access to public lands.**
- T-P32: Coordinate with other entities to identify viable options and projects for connection to the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail (FKA John Wayne Pioneer Trail) within Kittitas County and to adjacent counties.
- T-P33: Support the construction of parking facilities at identified locations known for recreational and multi-modal use.



5.5.10 Transit

T-G10: Support efforts to provide public transportation services to the general population.

T-P34: Work with local transit operators to maintain existing transit services. Where appropriate, support service expansion. See section 5.3.5 for transit levels of service.

5.5.11 Coordination

T-G11: Coordinate with a broad range of groups (including local, state, and regional agencies, airports, businesses, and the public) to develop and operate the transportation system.

5.5.12 County and Agency Planning

T-G12: Identify, review, and resolve interjurisdictional transportation concerns within or affecting Kittitas County.

T-P35: Work with WSDOT to minimize traffic on county roads resulting from congestion on heavily used state facilities.

T-P36: Work with WSDOT, QuadCo RTPO, cities, and neighboring counties to develop and maintain a system of arterials, collectors, and local access roads.

T-P37: Coordinate transportation planning, construction, and maintenance efforts with all affected agencies by developing joint transportation standards for urban growth areas between the County and the adjoining city or town.

T-P38: Seek partnerships with other public or private agents when mutual benefits and significant cost savings are anticipated as a result of a coordinated transportation improvement project to maximize benefits while minimizing costs.

T-P39: Actively participate in selected state, regional, and local transportation committees.

T-P40: Ensure County plans and policies are consistent with other plans and policies within the region.

T-P41: Identify stakeholders and include them in the decision-making process and jointly develop a process for resolving conflicts between jurisdictions.

T-P42: Promote public information and communication with businesses, organizations, and individual citizens as part of the transportation planning and decision-making process.



5.5.13 Airports and Airfields

T-G13: **Protect Kittitas County Airport (Bowers Field [ELN]), Cle Elum Municipal, DeVere Field, and Easton State airports from adjacent incompatible land uses and/or activities that could impact the present or future use of these or other public use airports as essential public facilities.**

T-P43: Recognize air transport and airports as an important mode of the transportation system and coordinate with FAA and WSDOT Aviation Division.

T-P44: Maintain up-to-date maps of airport overlays and make them available to the public.

5.5.14 Funding and Costs

T-G14: **Plan for a financially viable system that considers the full lifecycle costs of infrastructure and leverages outside funds, while maintaining existing transportation facilities in a state-of-good-repair to ensure their continued function.**

T-P45: Improve the sustainability of the County's funding for maintenance, operations, and capital improvements. Periodically review funding status and consider either increasing revenues generated by existing sources or establishing new funding sources for transportation.

T-P46: Maximize local funds by pursuing outside funding sources for all transportation improvement projects.

T-P47: Consider all funding options for financing transportation improvements by evaluating the potential funds, including taxes, grants, fees, etc., and securing funds from all available sources.

T-P48: Encourage efforts to reduce the costs associated with administration of transportation improvement projects by identifying opportunities to consolidate or coordinate administration responsibilities.

T-P49: Ensure the transportation system can support new development and that new development funds all new construction and improvements that might be necessary to maintain adopted level of service standards.

5.5.15 Project Prioritization

T-G15: **Prioritize projects and expenditures of transportation funds that have multiple benefits.**

T-P50: Prioritize arterial improvements and maintenance activities based on traffic volumes, multimodal uses, and identified safety concerns.



- T-P51: Establish appropriate performance measures by maintaining the Pavement Management System (PMS) to measure pavement conditions and to prioritize maintenance or improvement projects, and the Hazard Elimination Safety Program to identify potentially hazardous locations and to prioritize mitigation measures.
- T-P52: Maintain an arterial system that can accommodate legal weights year-round by developing a program for identifying and prioritizing maintenance and reconstruction projects for roads that are used primarily for freight and goods movement.

5.5.16 Maintenance

T-G16: Provide scheduled preservation and maintenance of valuable roadway assets.

- T-P53: Consider the traffic volumes, type of use, adjacent land uses, and maintenance costs before approving any new County-maintained gravel roads.
- T-P54: Maintain and operate transportation infrastructure according to industry standards.
- T-P55: Encourage and initiate Road Improvement Districts to bring all roads up to County standards.
- T-P56: Protect at-risk roads by imposing seasonal weight restrictions as appropriate.

5.6 Future Transportation Planning

Collectively, the Transportation Element's capital program adds up to \$127 million in transportation improvements to be constructed over the next 20 years as seen in the 20-year Transportation Plan .

The program was developed to create a transportation system that realizes Kittitas County's transportation goal: a safe, balanced, and efficient multi-modal transportation system that serves anticipated local and regional growth. This vision is guided by the transportation goals outlined in this Element. With this goal in mind, the project list was developed.

The 2018-2038 Kittitas County Long-Range Transportation Plan, also referred to as the 20-year plan in Public Works documents, describes the recommended projects, which represent a balance of safety, maintenance, and operational improvements for all modes. These projects provide a starting point for the County in developing its Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program, which is updated annually and is developed based on knowledge related to project feasibility and funding availability.

5.6.1 Six-Year Transportation Plan

Kittitas County updates its six-year Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) annually to guide investments in roadway safety, infrastructure preservation, and capacity enhancements. The plan emphasizes improvements that address high-risk areas, maintain critical corridors, and support growing communities. Typical initiatives include intersection upgrades to improve visibility and reduce crashes, corridor safety enhancements such as rumble strips and delineation markers, and roadway segment



improvements to mitigate hazards like sharp curves and steep embankments. Bridge and structure upgrades are also a key focus, ensuring crossings meet current safety standards and accommodate all users. Additional priorities include pavement preservation, culvert and drainage improvements, and strategies to enhance multimodal access for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit. These efforts are designed to provide a safe, efficient, and reliable transportation network for residents, visitors, and freight throughout the county.

5.6.2 Safety Projects

Based on crash data and a risk-based prioritization approach, the County's safety program targets improvements that reduce accident frequency and severity. Key strategies include:

1. Intersection Safety Enhancements: Evaluating and implementing solutions such as signals, roundabouts, and improved signage.
2. Corridor Upgrades: Adding rumble strips, LED markers, and delineation to reduce run-off-the-road crashes.
3. Roadway Segment Improvements: Installing guardrails, widening shoulders, and upgrading signage on curves and embankments.
4. Bridge and Structure Safety: Replacing or widening deficient structures and adding crashworthy railings to meet modern standards.

These projects reflect a proactive approach to improving transportation safety and reliability as the county grows.

5.6.3 Regional Collaboration

The County's priority in this plan is to coordinate with a broad range of groups to develop and operate the transportation system. A key element of this will be partnering with the city governments, WSDOT, US Forest Service (USFS), and Federal Highway Administration to ensure regional travel patterns and spillover of interstate traffic onto county roads do not impact quality of life in Kittitas County.

Table 5-3: Costs of Kittitas County Transportation Plan (20+ Years)

Project Needs	Description	Total Cost (in millions)
Road Projects to Accommodate Growth	Ensuring LOS standards are met	\$2.4
Roadway Investments	Traffic signals, intersection improvements, capacity enhancements	\$19.6
Nonmotorized	Bicycle and pedestrian projects, trails	\$4.9
Evacuation	Priority evacuation routes	\$10
Bridge Replacement	Replacement of bridges that are structurally deficient or +75 years	\$61.6
Maintenance and Rehabilitation	Overlay, pavement repair, and bridge repairs	\$28.8
Planning	Planning studies	\$0.1
	Total	\$127.4

Source: Fehr and Peers, 2018



5.6.4 Cities

There are city projects outside of Kittitas County's purview that will affect travel in and around the county. Ellensburg recently updated their comprehensive plan and identified transportation projects within the city limits that are needed to accommodate future growth. The County should balance its land use and roadway network with adopted city plans. Coordination with Ellensburg as well as the other cities within the county will be necessary to determine the best allocation of resources for transportation improvements.

5.6.5 Transit Facilities

On the transit side, Ellensburg is working to improve Central Transit service and facilities within the city that will connect with regional transit options.

Greater Kittitas County currently has on demand transit service within the region and a daily scheduled route through HopeSource to Kittitas, Cle Elum, and Roslyn, and Ronald, but a more integrated Central Transit network would support the County transit and any future expansions. Increased Central Transit service would also connect residents to the intercity Yakima Commuter route that travels between Ellensburg and Yakima during the week.

5.6.6 WSDOT

WSDOT supports multimodal integration into projects and planning multi-agency and community network interconnectivity. The state system provides access to key destinations within the county, so WSDOT will partner with Kittitas County to ensure that both agencies' needs and concerns are addressed. WSDOT made recent improvements to Interstate 90 Snoqualmie Pass East which included widening, paving, and safety improvements along a seven-mile section of Interstate 90.

5.6.7 US Forest Service

The USFS owns and maintains roads throughout Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, which covers a large portion of Kittitas County. Maintenance and repairs are necessary to provide access to popular recreation destinations. Collaboration with the USFS is necessary to ensure these facilities are maintained and accessible to Kittitas County residents and visitors.

5.6.8 Federal Highway Administration

The Federal Highway Administration partners with local agencies to oversee maintenance, capital projects, and preservation of the country's roads and bridges. It regulates road operations, provides research and guidance on transportation best practices, and is a potential source of funds for improvement projects throughout the county.



5.7 Funding Strategies

The Transportation Element considers Kittitas County's funding picture over the next 20 years and provides strategies to support implementation.

Based on historical revenues, the County will generate an estimated \$207 million over the 20-year planning horizon, with \$130 million available for operations and \$77 million restricted for capital expenses. With a projected \$171 million in operational expenses, the County faces a \$41 million deficit in operating revenues. The \$77 million in revenue for capital expenses is not sufficient to complete the \$127 million of projects on the County's prioritized project list. The County faces an additional \$50 million deficit in revenues for capital projects. Together, the County faces a \$91 million deficit in operating and capital costs.

Detailed revenue and expenditure calculations can be found in the 2018-2038 Kittitas County Long-Range Transportation Plan.

Any funding strategy must balance stated goals against developing sustainable revenue sources that are feasible for the County to implement. Historically, the County's transportation program has been operating at capacity. During the last few years, transportation revenues have dropped below operating expenditures. At the same time, the County has been accumulating a growing list of capital projects that are critically needed to provide safe roads, highways, bridges, and infrastructure. In addition, the County has been growing at a steady rate and this growth is expected to continue.

Looking into the future, Kittitas County faces a fundamental, structural challenge—and this larger systemic issue must be considered as part of a long-term transportation funding strategy.

5.7.1 Balancing Financial Capacity with Future Funding Needs

When comparing total available revenues for transportation with expected costs over the 20-year planning horizon, revenues fall short of paying for the current estimated operating and capital costs.

Two main strategies can be used to balance this implementation plan:

1. Decrease expenses by decreasing level of service or further prioritizing capital projects.
2. Increase revenue, through increases in existing funding tools or implementation of new funding or financing tools.

Decreasing current expenses is not likely to yield large gains, as the County has already implemented this strategy where possible.

Given the limited ability of the County to further reduce expenditures, a list of potential funding and financing tools was compiled to help address future funding needs.

It is recommended that the County pursue a Transportation Benefit District (TBD) and then establish a Vehicle Licensing Fee, in combination with a county road property tax levy lid lift. It should also explore Transportation Impact Fees and a Sales and Use Tax levied via a Transportation Benefit District as avenues for additional revenue. While impact fees can only be used for capital costs, the other three can



be used to cover both operating and capital costs. summarizes these tools and their potential for revenue.

Table 5-4: Potential Additional Revenue Generated by Funding Tools

Funding Source	2018 – 2023	2024 – 2027	Total, 2018 – 2027	2028 - 2037	Total, 2018 - 2037
	(Years 1 – 6)	(Years 7 – 10)	(Years 1 – 10)	(Years 11 – 20)	(Years 1 – 20)
TBD – Vehicle Licensing Fee	\$6,540,000	\$6,510,000	\$13,050,000	\$18,570,000	\$31,610,000
TBD – Sales and Use Tax	\$4,740,000	\$3,500,000	\$8,250,000	\$9,990,000	\$18,240,000
County road property tax levy lid lift (\$1.75 per \$1000 assessed value [AV])	\$22,170,000	\$13,150,000	\$35,320,000	\$26,990,000	\$62,320,000
Transportation Impact	\$6,000,000	\$4,000,000	\$10,000,000	\$10,000,000	\$20,000,000
Total	\$39,450,000	\$27,160,000	\$66,620,000	\$65,550,000	\$132,170,000

Note: These figures are rounded to the nearest 10,000.

Source: Kittitas County Public Works 2018; Washington State Department of Licensing 2018; BERK Consulting 2018.

Another option that could be explored is tolling on county roads. Tolling can help to manage congestion due to overflow from state facilities, as it helps drivers realize the true costs of using county roads instead of state roads. However, the infrastructure to support tolling is not yet in place and could be costly and staff intensive to implement and maintain.



6 CAPITAL FACILITIES PLAN

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of the Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) is to plan for adequate public facilities within the County's financial capability. The Capital Facilities Plan provides the framework for this planning effort and adopts by reference a six-year list of proposed projects and financing plan called the Kittitas County's Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Projects proposed in the Capital Improvement Program are public facility improvements needed to shape and maintain our quality of life. All of the public facility improvements identified in the Capital Improvement Program must be consistent with the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan and scheduled to be in place concurrently with development impacts to maintain or exceed adopted standards for level of service.

Kittitas County public facilities include County-owned buildings, land, parks, and roads. Other public facility plans that are not under Kittitas County ownership are also listed or included by reference, such as plans for water, sewer, fire, schools, and parks. A capital project may include a newly constructed facility, a renovated facility, a major repair, or reconstruction of damaged or deteriorating facilities. This plan does not cover routine maintenance, furniture, or equipment.

6.1.1 Statutory Requirements

The Growth Management Act, adopted by the Washington State Legislature, requires comprehensive planning to guide growth and development. The Capital Facilities Plan is one of six mandatory planning elements that the Growth Management Act requires in each county's comprehensive plan (RCW 36.70A.070 (3)). The Capital Facilities Plan must identify specific facilities, include a realistic financing plan, and adjust the plan if funding is inadequate. WAC 365-196-415 provides requirements and recommendations for the Capital Facilities Plan Element.

6.1.2 Supporting Plans and Relationship with Other Documents

There is a direct relationship between the Capital Facilities Plan and the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan. The Land Use Element determines where and at what density population and employment growth will be located. The Capital Facilities Plan identifies the thresholds of growth when new and expanded public facilities are needed and indicates the County's priority system for constructing the identified public facilities. Although some public facilities are provided by government agencies or private entities other than the County, the County is responsible for showing that these services are available.

Identified improvements to public facilities that are owned or operated by Kittitas County shall also be included in the County's annual budget. Any identified public facility improvements that are not owned or operated by the County, but by independent districts or private organizations, should be included in



the annual budgets and capital improvement programs of the entities which provide those public facilities.

State, local government, and district plans that are affected by proposed public facility improvements will be considered prior to inclusion of the improvements in the Capital Improvement Program. This includes considering a city's comprehensive plan when evaluating proposed improvements that affect that city's urban growth area.

6.1.3 Capital Facilities Plan Update Process

Any updates to the Capital Facilities Plan Element of the Comprehensive Plan will be considered concurrently with other proposed amendments that are docketed for the annual Kittitas County's Comprehensive Plan amendment review. Kittitas County's Capital Improvement Program, adopted by reference, is a dynamic document that will be updated annually to reflect new cost information, funding information, project list changes, and existing facility updates. The annual updates to the Capital Improvement Program will be done prior to the annual budget process so that Capital Improvement Program projects can be included in the annual budget.

6.2 Capital Project Selection Procedures

6.2.1 Levels of Service Standards

The County's level of service standards for public facilities are as shown in **Table 6-1**.

Table 6-1: Kittitas County Level of Service Standards

Facility Category	Type	Standard for Level of Service
1. Transportation	Roads	LOS C in rural areas and LOS D in federal urban areas
2. Parks and Recreation	Regional Parks	5 acres per 1,000 population
3. Solid Waste Disposal	Solid Waste	4.0 pounds per capita per day

6.2.2 Application of Levels of Service Standards

The County and public facility providers will use the level of service standards shown in **Table 6-1** for identifying improvements needed to:

- Address existing deficiencies
- Preserve existing capacity
- Provide for new development
- Enhance quality of life
- Meet other community needs not related to growth



The County will evaluate whether or not these level of service standards are being met when updates to the Comprehensive Plan are performed according to the deadlines in RCW 36.70A.130(1), when urban growth areas are reviewed according to RCW 36.70A.130(3), and facilities are inadequate, the County will consider one or more of the following strategies:

- Reduce public facility demand
- Reduce level of service standards
- Increase revenue
- Reduce the cost of the needed public facilities
- Reallocate or redirect population and employment growth to make better use of existing facilities
- Phase growth or adjust the timing of development if the lack of public facilities is a short-term issue
- Revise countywide population forecasts within the allowable range

The County will also evaluate if proposed development activities would reduce the level of service of public facilities below the adopted standards. If a proposal is expected to impact a transportation facility, lowering its level of service below the standard, then preliminary development approval shall not be granted unless improvements or strategies are made concurrent with the development that will maintain the level of service standards. All other types of public facilities with level of service standards listed above do not have the specific concurrency requirement that transportation facilities have, but they do require the provision of adequate public facilities as a condition of project approval.

6.2.3 Project Criteria Other Than Levels of Service Standards

Public facility improvements that are not needed for maintaining level of service standards can be programmed if they are:

- Facility repairs
- Remodel
- Renovation
- Replacement of obsolete or worn-out structures
- Improvements that do not reduce financing for other improvements needed to achieve or maintain the standards for level of service
- Improvements that do not contradict, limit, or substantially change the goals and policies of any Element of this Comprehensive Plan

Public facility improvements may also provide capacity in excess of what would be required to achieve or maintain level of service standards (i.e., the minimum capacity of a capital project is larger than the capacity required to provide the level of service). Excess capacity is beneficial if it results in economies of scale making it less expensive than a comparable amount of capacity if acquired at a later date.

However, these projects should be given a lower priority than projects needed to maintain level of service standards.



6.2.4 Analysis of Future Development

The County will estimate the type and amount of public facilities needed to accommodate future growth by evaluating previously issued development permits and determining future growth patterns.

Future development will be required to pay its fair share of the capital improvements needed to address the impact of such development and the portion of the cost of the replacement of obsolete or worn-out facilities. The different methods of payment allowed for these capital improvements include:

- Voluntary contributions for the benefit of any public facility
- SEPA mitigation payments
- Dedications of land
- Provision of public facilities

The growth forecasts, to be used for planning purposes and the specific growth targets for each urban growth area, are developed using the Kittitas County population projections established by the OFM. The OFM prepares high, medium, and low forecasts for each county, with the middle range representing the most likely scenario. Kittitas County jurisdictions determined that the medium forecast best represents growth trends in this area.

6.2.5 Siting Public Facilities

There are types of public facilities that cannot be located in rural areas of the county but must remain in the city or urban growth areas. These include new municipal urban public facilities that are owned or operated by cities for residential development. This includes public facilities that are owned or operated by cities such as sewage collection and treatment, urban street infrastructure, and storm water collection facilities. The County may coordinate planning and development of public facilities in urban growth areas with municipalities and public facility providers by entering into interlocal/joint planning agreements, contracts, memorandums of understanding, or joint ordinances.

Privately owned and operated facilities located outside of cities and urban growth areas may be approved, developed, and operated subject to compliance with County and state codes. Eligible facilities include Group A & B Water Systems, Large On-site Sewer Systems (LOSS), Membrane Bioreactors (MBRs), Storm Water Collection Facilities, Power Facilities, Fire Facilities such as Stations and Water Facilities, and Data Facilities.

Capital facilities and utilities may be constructed and operated by outside public service providers on rural properties if they are within the boundaries of a master planned resort, or limited areas of more intensive rural development, which is approved pursuant to County Comprehensive Plan policies and development regulations. Privately owned and operated facilities including electric and natural gas transmission and distribution facilities may be sited throughout Kittitas County both inside and outside of municipal boundaries, urban growth areas, master planned resorts, and limited areas of more intensive rural development.



The County will coordinate with the Kittitas County Conference of Governments, utility providers and/or municipalities within the county when siting regional and community facilities. This coordination may include developing an inventory of essential facilities, determining a fair share allocation of essential facilities, determining needed facilities, and the jurisdiction responsible for each facility, conducting public involvement strategies, and assuring protections for the environment, public health, and public safety.

6.2.6 Improvements to Public Facilities Identified in Other Plans

Various plans have been prepared that identify potential capital projects that can be included in a future six-year plan. The County will consider these projects as funding becomes available or when it is determined that public facilities have inadequate level of service. The following plans will be considered:

- **Swift Water Corridor Vision 74.** It was prepared by a citizen's advisory committee in 1997 to identify unique and special features within the State Route 10 corridor. This plan recommends strategies and capital improvements that are focused on economic development and tourism programs.
- **Kittitas County Outdoor Recreation Inventory.** It was completed June 1, 2004, by the Recreation Advisory Committee to identify recreation activities and services. The recreation opportunities and facilities include parks, trails, river access, public lands access, campgrounds, and picnic facilities.
- **City County Economic Development Strategic Plan**, prepared in February 2023. It is a framework for investment decisions and providing guidance in growth for the county's economic future.
- **Solid Waste Management Plan** – Identified to be updated in 2026 .

6.2.7 Airport Plan (Bowers Field [ELN])

The County manages multiple airport facilities in Kittitas County. These facilities include Bowers Field Airport (ELN) and its associated hangers. The County has planned for the associated improvements to the airport facilities in their Six-Year Capital Improvement Plan.

6.2.8 Prioritizing Public Facility Projects

Prioritization of projects and programs can be difficult, so the County established the following general guidance in prioritizing public facility projects, from highest to lowest priorities:

1. Repair existing public facilities to achieve or maintain adopted level of service
2. Construct new or expanded public facilities to achieve or maintain adopted level of service
3. Repair existing public facilities or construct new public facilities to eliminate hazards
4. Construct new or expanded public facilities to achieve or maintain adopted level of service as forecasted during the next six years



5. Repair existing public facilities or construct new public facilities to reduce the operating cost of providing a public service or facility
6. Construct new facilities to provide excess capacity that will be needed beyond the next six years
7. All other facilities the County is obligated to complete that do not meet the criteria above

6.3 Existing Facilities

Kittitas County currently owns and is responsible for maintaining existing facilities listed in **Table 6-2**. These facilities are located both in the county and within incorporated cities within Kittitas County. These listed facilities, new facilities, and the updating and maintenance of these facilities will be described in the Capital Improvement Plan on an annual basis.

Table 6-2: Kittitas County Existing Facilities

Name	Address	Jurisdiction	Size	Year Built
Administrative Buildings				
Armory Building	901 E 7th Ave	Ellensburg	13,140	1950
County Courthouse	205 W 5th Ave #180	Ellensburg	47,691	1958
Permit Center	411 N Ruby St	Ellensburg	13,625	1959
Public Safety Building	205 W 5th Ave	Ellensburg	33,209	1985 (remodeled in 2012)
Sheriff Administration Office	307 Umptanum Rd	Ellensburg	11,880	2009
Sorenson Building	507 N Nanum St	Ellensburg	17,648	1942
Upper District Court Building	700 E 1st St	Cle Elum	6,000	Unknown (remodeled in 2013) 1989
Vantage Marine Storage Building	Boat Ramp Rd	Vantage	1,024	2014
Boating Storage Building				
Jail Pod				
Office/Restrooms				
Event Center/Fairgrounds				
Frontier Village Buildings		Ellensburg	Unknown	1890s
Grandstand - Main/Heritage Bldg		Ellensburg	18,965	1925
8th Avenue Ticket Office		Ellensburg	1,568	1930s
Souvenir Booth		Ellensburg	Unknown	2004
Posse Barn (1)		Ellensburg	3,000	1940s
Posse Barn (2)		Ellensburg	4,800	1940s
Light Horse Barn		Ellensburg	3,200	1940s
Cattle and Swine Barn*		Ellensburg	12,000	1940s
Draft Horse Barn		Ellensburg	10,450	1940s
Teanaway/Umtanum Building		Ellensburg	17,556	1940s
First Rodeo Director's Barn		Ellensburg	3,250	1940s



Name	Address	Jurisdiction	Size	Year Built
Second Rodeo Director's Barn		Ellensburg	3,250	1940
Dog Barn		Ellensburg	1,200	1940
Bleachers W. (Covered)		Ellensburg	10,756	1960s
Bleachers E, (Uncovered)		Ellensburg	10,000	1960s
Restrooms/R.A. (1)		Ellensburg	2,035	1960s
Fair Office and Restrooms		Ellensburg	3,954	1974
Behind the Chutes		Ellensburg	1,000	1976
Bloom Pavilion		Ellensburg	26,400	1980
Restrooms/R.A. (2)		Ellensburg	645	1982
Maintenance Shop		Ellensburg	1,500	1986
Gazebo		Ellensburg	450	1989
Buckaroo's Stands and Pens		Ellensburg	5,984	1991
Gold Buckle Building		Ellensburg	2,400	2001
Western Village		Ellensburg	3,140	2004
Fair Storage Shed		Ellensburg	600	2004
East Rodeo Concession		Ellensburg	600	2005
Bronze Pig Statue		Ellensburg	N/A	2007
Rodeo Arena Bleachers		Ellensburg	3,950	2007
Fair Shed (Fuel)		Ellensburg	100	2008
West Rodeo Concession		Ellensburg	Unknown	Unknown
4-H/Home Arts Building		Ellensburg		
Superintendent Building (1)		Ellensburg		
Superintendent Building (2)		Ellensburg		
New Ticket Office Building (1)		Ellensburg		
New Ticket Office Building (2)		Ellensburg		
Posse Barn Building (0)		Ellensburg		
Ticket Office Gate		Ellensburg		
Bowling Alley Building	830 N Poplar St	Ellensburg	15,221	1958
Maintenance Shop, Storage, Parking				
Lower County PWD Heavy Equipment Storage West Shed	507 W 14th Ave	Ellensburg	4,875	1951
Lower County PWD Heavy Equipment Storage East Shed	503 W 14th Ave	Ellensburg	4,875	1951
Lower County PWD Main Heavy Equipment Shop	505 W 14th Ave	Ellensburg	6,240	1951
Sheriff Central Storage	301 Umptanum Rd #1	Ellensburg	2,160	2009
Upper County PWD main heavy equipment shop/admin	51 No. 5 Mine Road	Cle Elum	13,750	2021
Upper County PWD Salt/Sand storage	51 No. 5 Mine Road	Cle Elum	10,370	2021



Name	Address	Jurisdiction	Size	Year Built
Upper County PWD Equipment Storage Shed	51 No. 5 Mine Road	Cle Elum	9,515	2021
Upper County PWD Parking Lot	51 No. 5 Mine Road	Cle Elum	20 stalls	Unknown
Vantage Boat Launch Parking Lot	Boat Ramp Rd	Vantage	62 stalls	1990
Armory Parking Lot	901 E 7th Ave	Ellensburg	20 stalls	Unknown
S Courthouse Parking Lot			21 stalls	Unknown
W Courthouse Parking Lot			7 stalls	Unknown
SW 6th Ave & Water Street			44 stalls	Unknown
NW 6th Ave & Water Street			58 stalls	Unknown
NE 6th Ave & Water Street			18 stalls	Unknown
N Permit Center			14 stalls	Unknown
S Permit Center			10 stalls	Unknown
Sheriff Administration Office Parking Lot			51 stalls	Unknown
SW Sorenson Building Parking Lot			24 stalls	Unknown
W Upper District Court Building Parking Lot			22 (shared) stalls	Unknown
Cle Elum Centennial Center - Parking Lot for Public Health			30 (shared) stalls	Unknown
Suncadia/Upper County Sheriff Office Parking Lot			22 (shared) stalls	Unknown
Kittitas Valley Event Center/Fairgrounds Parking Lots			136 stalls	Unknown
Lower County PWD Shop Parking Lot			~20 stalls	Unknown
E UPS Store			35 stalls	Unknown
Lower County Shop Office Addition				
Lower County Northeast Equipment Shed				
Lower County Northwest Equipment Shed				
Upper County East Equipment Storage Building				
Airport Hangar Building 404				
Maintenance Shop Building				
Parks and Recreation				
Vantage Boat Launch & Restrooms	Boat Ramp Rd	Vantage	342	1990
Coal Mines Trail	Cle Elum to Ronald		10.4 mi	Unknown
Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail/Iron Horse State Park	North Bend to Vantage		100 mi	1981



Name	Address	Jurisdiction	Size	Year Built
The Cove Recreation Area	West of Huntzinger Road near Wanapum Dam		20 acres	Unknown
Kittitas County Outdoor Recreation Inventory			Varies	Unknown
Evergreen Sno-Park	1 mi east of Snoqualmie summit		23 mi	Unknown
Solid Waste				
Cle Elum Transfer Station	50 No. 5 Mine Rd	Cle Elum	9,000	2003
MRW - Cle Elum	50 No. 5 Mine Rd	Cle Elum	2,000	2003
Cle Elum Scale House	Hwy 903	Cle Elum	160	1981
Transfer Street Building	1001 Industrial Way	Ellensburg	9,078	2000
Scale House Bldg	1001 Industrial Way	Ellensburg	1,000	2000
Ryegrass Building	25900 Vantage Hwy	Ellensburg	1,620	1980
Ellensburg Scale House (Storage)	801 Industrial Way	Ellensburg	160	1981
Cle Elum Storage	Hwy 903	Cle Elum	925	1981
Cle Elum Bunker Building	Hwy 903	Cle Elum	3,000	1981
Transfer Station Office	925 Industrial Way	Ellensburg	1,980	1963
Transfer Station Shop	925 Industrial Way	Ellensburg	1,680	1963
MRW - Ellensburg	50 No. 5 Mine Rd	Cle Elum	3,000	2001
Office/Admin Building	50 No. 5 Mine Rd	Cle Elum	120	2003
SW 400 sq. ft. building	25900 Vantage Hwy	Ellensburg	400	2008

6.4 Financing

6.4.1 Funding Sources for Public Facility Projects

Identifying funding sources for public facility projects is critical to the success of the Kittitas County's Capital Improvement Plan. It requires coordination among County departments and a thorough understanding of the fiscal capacity of the County to finance these facilities.

Public facility projects are often very expensive, requiring multi-year commitments of financial resources. It is important to understand that a Capital Improvement Plan does not represent a financial commitment or guarantee that the projects will be implemented. County approval does not automatically authorize funding. It does approve the program in concept and provides validity to the planning process.

To stretch money as far as possible, many different funding sources are considered. The financing of some projects relies on outside grant resources. If grants are not received, the projects may be delayed, removed, or financed with dedicated revenues, general revenues, excess surplus funds, or bond financing. The various methods of financing are as follows:



1. County enterprise funds have been established for certain County departments such as the Solid Waste Department. Enterprise funds are financing from:
 - a. Debt to be repaid by user fees and charges and/or connection or capacity fees for enterprise services.
 - b. Current assets (i.e., reserves, equity or surpluses, and current revenue, including grants, loans, donations, and interlocal agreements).
 - c. A combination of debt and current assets.
2. Non-enterprise funds are financed from:
 - a. Current assets: (i.e., current revenue, fund equity, and reserves)
 - b. Debt (see County's Debt Management Policy)
 - c. Combination of current assets and debt.

The County is guided by the following three principles in selecting a funding source for public facility improvements:

1. **Equity:** Whenever appropriate, the beneficiaries of a project or service will pay for it. For example, if a project is a general function of government that benefits the entire community, such as a school, police station, or library, the project will be paid for with general tax revenues or financed with general obligation bonds. If, however, the project benefits specific users, such as water and sewer facilities, the revenues will be derived through user fees or charges, targeted taxes, and assessments.
2. **Effectiveness:** In selecting a source or sources for financing projects, the County will select one or more that effectively funds the total cost of the project. For example, funding a capital project, or the debt service on a project, with a user fee that does not provide sufficient funds to pay for the project is not an effective means of funding the project.
3. **Efficiency:** If grants or current revenues are not available to fund a project, the County will select a financing technique that provides for the lowest total cost consistent with acceptable risk factors and principals of equity and effectiveness. These methods currently consist of fixed-rate general obligation or revenue bonds issued by the County, special funding programs funded by state or federal agencies, or special pool financing.

When public facility improvements are located both in the city and urban growth areas, the County and city can jointly sponsor the formation of Local Improvement Districts, Road Improvement Districts, and other benefit areas for the construction or reconstruction of infrastructure to a common standard.



6.4.2 When Funding is Unavailable

If revenues that require voter approval in a local referendum that has not been held or is held and is not successful, the Capital Improvement Plan will be revised at the next annual amendment to adjust for the lack of such revenues, in any of the following ways:

- Reduce the level of service for one or more public facilities
- Increase the use of other sources of revenue
- Decrease the cost, and therefore the quality of some types of public facilities while retaining the quantity of the facilities that is inherent in the standard for level of service
- Decrease the demand for and subsequent use of public facilities
- A combination of the above alternatives

Developments that require public facility improvements shall be required to secure financing for these improvements as a condition of final County approval.

6.4.3 Maintenance Financing

The County intends to set aside sufficient revenue to finance ongoing maintenance needs and to provide periodic replacement and renewal of public facilities. This is necessary to keep public facilities in good repair and to maximize their useful life. The County should not provide a public facility or accept the provision of a public facility by others, if the County or other provider is unable to pay for the subsequent annual operating and maintenance costs of the facility.

6.5 Six-Year Plan

The County shall provide, or arrange for others to provide, the public facility improvements planned to take place in the next six-year period, with projected beginning and completion dates, estimated costs, and proposed methods of financing. This information is detailed in Kittitas County's Capital Improvement Plan and is considered the six-year plan.

The six-year plan is reviewed and updated annually in conjunction with the annual budget process for corrections, updates, and modifications concerning costs, revenue sources, identified public facilities, and schedule. Each update to the six-year plan in the Capital Improvement Plan is adopted by reference.

6.6 Existing Facility Inventory

Kittitas County's Capital Improvement Plan includes an inventory of the public facilities in Kittitas County. The Capital Improvement Plan's existing public facility inventory is updated annually, and each update is adopted by reference.

The purpose of maintaining a current inventory of existing public facilities is to show what facilities are currently available to county residents, what condition they are in, and whether they have sufficient capacity to address long-term community needs.



6.7 Goals and Policies

Each goal and policy has been assigned a unique identifier that indicates the element where it is located, specifies whether it is a goal or a policy, and includes a sequential number for organization. For example:

CFP-G1 = Capital Facilities Plan Element, Goal 1

CFP-P1 = Capital Facilities Plan Element, Policy 1

- CF-G1:** Provide needed public facilities that are within the ability of the County to fund the facilities, or within the County's authority to require others to provide the facilities.
- CF-G2:** Manage the land development process to ensure that all development receives public facility levels of service equal to the standards adopted by the County Commissioners by implementing the schedule of capital improvements contained in this Capital Facilities Plan, and by using the fiscal resources.
- CF-G3:** Provide consistency with the adopted Land Use Map and the goals and policies of other elements of this Comprehensive Plan.
- CF-G4:** Provide and maintain adopted standards for level of service for existing and future development in a manner and location consistent with the Land Use Element of this Comprehensive Plan.
- CF-G5:** Develop criteria and cooperative and structured processes through the Kittitas County Conference of Governments for siting regional facilities.
- CF-G6:** The County may identify lands useful for public purposes and incorporate such designations in the Comprehensive Plan.
- CF-G7:** Ensure that essential public facilities, which are identified by the County, by regional agreement, or by state or federal government, follow all local approvals by the County and each municipality in the county.
- CF-G8:** Ensure public involvement when siting of essential public facilities using timely press releases, newspaper notices, public information meetings, and public hearings.
- CF-G9:** Administer the County's policies and regulations on facility siting with and in advance of other planning goals including, but not necessarily limited to, the following:
 - a) Promotion of economic development and employment opportunities
 - b) Protection of the environment
 - c) Positive fiscal impact and on-going benefit to the host jurisdiction
 - d) Serving population groups needing affordable housing
 - e) Receipt of financial or other incentives from the state and/or other local governments
 - f) Fair distribution of such public facilities throughout the county
 - g) Requiring state and federal projects to be consistent with this policy.



CF-G10: Provide adequate public facilities for urban growth areas.

CF-G11: The County and each municipality in the county will coordinate and address fiscal issues including tax revenue sharing, the provision of regional services, and annexations through the development of interlocal agreements.

CF-G12: As growth continues to occur both in the urban and rural areas of Kittitas County, evaluate increased impacts on existing library services and increasing demands for additional library services.

CF-P1: The County shall establish standards for level of service for public facilities. The level of service shall be cooperatively defined by all segments of the public and private sector involved in providing a service.

CF-P2: The County shall determine the quantity of capital improvements that are needed.

CF-P3: Legal restrictions on the use of many revenue sources limit the extent to which types of facilities compete for priority with other types of facilities because they do not compete for the same revenues. All capital improvements that are necessary for achieving and maintaining a standard for level of service adopted in this Comprehensive Plan are included in the financially feasible schedule of capital improvements contained in this Capital Facilities Plan. The relative priorities among types of public facilities (i.e., roads, sanitary sewer, etc.) were established by adjusting the standards for level of service and the available revenues until the resulting public facilities needs became financially feasible. This process is repeated with each update of the Capital Facilities Plan, thus allowing for changes in priorities among types of public facilities.

CF-P4: Capital improvements within a type of public facility are to be evaluated on the following criteria and considered in the order of priority listed below. The County shall establish the final priority of all capital facility improvements using the following criteria as general guidelines. Any revenue source that cannot be used for a high priority facility shall be used beginning with the highest priority for which the revenue can legally be expended:

- a) Reconstruction, rehabilitation, remodeling, renovation, or replacement of obsolete or worn-out facilities that contribute to achieving or maintaining standards for levels of service adopted in this Comprehensive Plan.
- b) New or expanded facilities that reduce or eliminate deficiencies in level of service for existing demand. Expenditures in this priority category include equipment, furnishings, and other improvements necessary for the completion of a public facility (i.e., recreational facilities and park sites).



- c) New public facilities, and improvements to existing public facilities, which eliminate public hazards if such hazards were not otherwise eliminated by facility improvements prioritized according to Policies A or B, above.
- d) New or expanded facilities that provide the adopted level of service for new development and redevelopment during the next six fiscal years, as updated by the annual review of this Capital Facilities Plan. The County may acquire land or right-of-way in advance of the need to develop a facility for new development. The location of facilities constructed pursuant to this Policy shall conform to the Land Use Element, and specific project locations shall serve projected growth areas within the allowable land use categories. In the event that the planned capacity of public facilities is insufficient to serve all applicants for development permits, the capital improvements shall be scheduled to serve the following priority order:
 - i) Previously approved permits for redevelopment
 - ii) Previously approved permits for new development
 - iii) New permits for redevelopment
 - iv) New permits for new development
 - v) Improvements to existing facilities, and new facilities that significantly reduce the operating cost of providing a service or facility or otherwise mitigate impacts of public facilities on future operating budgets
- e) New facilities that exceed the adopted level of service for new growth during the next six fiscal years by either:
 - i) Providing excess public facility capacity that is needed by future growth beyond the next six fiscal years, or
 - ii) Providing higher quality public facilities than are contemplated in the County's normal design criteria for such facilities.
- f) Facilities not described in Policies A through F, above, but which the County is obligated to complete, provided that such obligation is evidenced by a written agreement the County executed prior to the adoption of this Comprehensive Plan.

CF-P5: All facilities scheduled for construction or improvement in accordance with this Policy shall be evaluated to identify any plans of state or local governments or districts that affect, or will be affected by, the proposed County capital improvement.

CF-P6: Project evaluation may also involve additional criteria that are unique to each type of public facility, as described in other Elements of this Comprehensive Plan.



CF-P7: Kittitas County shall consider recreation needs and the services which the County is able to provide from the countywide recreation plan and in coordination with other agencies and jurisdictions within Kittitas County. Recreation opportunities and facilities include, but are not limited to parks, trails, river access, public lands access, campgrounds, and picnic facilities.

CF-P8: Kittitas County shall consider the applicable adopted city's comprehensive plan for capital facilities and its relation to the identified urban growth areas.

CF-P9: Existing and future development shall both pay for the costs of needed capital improvements.

CF-P10: Existing development may be required to pay for capital improvements that reduce or eliminate existing deficiencies, some or all of the replacement of obsolete or worn-out facilities and may pay a portion of the cost of capital improvements needed by future development.

CF-P11: Existing developments' payments may take the form of user fees, charges for services, special assessments, and taxes.

CF-P12: Future development shall be required to pay its fair share of the capital improvements needed to address the impact of such development and may pay a portion of the cost of the replacement of obsolete or worn-out facilities. Upon completion of construction, "future" development becomes "existing" development, and shall contribute to paying the costs of the replacement of obsolete or worn-out facilities.

CF-P13: Future developments' payments may take the form of, but are not limited to, voluntary contributions for the benefit of any public facility, impact fees, mitigation payments, capacity fees, dedications of land, provision of public facilities, and future payments of user fees, charges for services, special assessments, and taxes. Future development shall not pay fees for the portion of any public facility that reduces or eliminates existing deficiencies.

CF-P14: Existing and future development may both have part of their costs paid by grants, entitlements, or public facilities from other levels of government and independent districts.

CF-P15: Capital improvements shall be financed, and debt shall be managed as follows:

- a) Capital improvements financed by County enterprise funds (i.e., solid waste) shall be financed by:
 - i) Debt to be repaid by user fees and charges and/or connection or capacity fees for enterprise services.



- ii) Current assets (i.e., reserves, equity, or surpluses, and current revenue, including grants, loans, donations, and interlocal agreements).
- iii) A combination of debt and current assets.
- iv) Capital improvements financed by non-enterprise funds shall be financed from either current asset: (i.e., current revenue, fund equity, and reserves), or debt, or a combination thereof. Financing decisions shall include consideration for which funding source (current assets, debt, or both) will be a) most cost effective, b) consistent with prudent asset and liability management, c) appropriate to the useful life of the project(s) to be financed, and d) the most efficient use of the County's ability to borrow funds.

b) Debt financing shall not be used to provide more capacity than is needed within the schedule of capital improvements for non-enterprise public facilities unless one of the following conditions are met:

- i) The excess capacity is an integral part of a capital improvement that is needed to achieve or maintain standards for level of service (i.e., the minimum capacity of a capital project is larger than the capacity required to provide the level of service).
- ii) The excess capacity provides economies of scale making it less expensive than a comparable amount of capacity if acquired at a later date.
- iii) The asset acquired is land that is environmentally sensitive or designated by the County as necessary for conservation or recreation.
- iv) The excess capacity is part of a capital project financed by general obligation bonds approved by referendum.

CF-P16: The County shall not provide a public facility, nor shall it accept the provision of a public facility by others, if the County or other provider is unable to pay for the subsequent annual operating and maintenance costs of the facility.

CF-P17: If sources of revenue require voter approval in a local referendum that has not been held, and a referendum is not held, or is held and is not successful, this Comprehensive Plan shall be revised at the next annual amendment to adjust for the lack of such revenues, in any of the following ways:

- a) Reduce the level of service for one or more public facilities;
- b) Increase the use of other sources of revenue;



- c) Decrease the cost, and therefore the quality of some types of public facilities while retaining the quantity of the facilities that is inherent in the standard for level of service;
- d) Decrease the demand for and subsequent use of capital facilities; or
- e) Combination of the above alternatives.

CF-P18: All development permits issued by the County which require capital improvements that will be financed by sources of revenue which have not been approved or implemented (such as future debt requiring referenda) shall be conditioned on the approval or implementation of the indicated revenue sources, or the substitution of a comparable amount of revenue from existing sources.

CF-P19: The County and cities may jointly sponsor the formation of Local Improvement Districts, Road Improvement Districts, and other benefit areas for the construction or reconstruction of infrastructure to a common standard, which are in the city and the urban growth areas.

CF-P20: Provide adequate public facilities by constructing needed capital improvements which (1) repair or replace obsolete or worn-out facilities, (2) eliminate existing deficiencies, and (3) meet the needs of future development and redevelopment caused by previously issued and new development permits. The County's ability to provide needed improvements will be demonstrated by maintaining a financially feasible schedule of capital improvements in this Capital Facilities Plan.

CF-P21: The County shall provide, or arrange for others to provide, the capital improvements listed in the schedule of capital improvements in this Capital Facilities Plan. The schedule for capital improvements may be modified as follows:

- a) The schedule for capital improvements shall be updated annually beginning in conjunction with the annual budget process.
- b) Pursuant to the Growth Management Act, the schedule of capital improvements may be amended one time during any calendar year.
- c) The schedule of capital improvements may be adjusted by ordinance not deemed to be an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan for corrections, updates, and modifications concerning costs; revenue sources; acceptance of facilities pursuant to dedications which are consistent with the plan; or the date of construction (so long as it is completed within the six-year period) of any facility enumerated in the schedule of capital improvements.



CF-P22: The County shall include in the capital appropriations of its annual budget all the capital improvements projects listed in the schedule of capital improvements for expenditure during the appropriate fiscal year, except that the County may omit from its annual budget any capital improvements for which a binding agreement has been executed with another party to provide the same project in the same fiscal year.

CF-P23: The County Commission finds that the impacts of development on public facilities within the county occur at the same time as occupancy of development authorized by a final development permit. The County shall issue development permits only after a determination that there is sufficient capacity of the public facilities to meet the standards for level of service for existing development and the impacts of the proposed development concurrent with the proposed development. For the purpose of this policy and the County's land development regulations, "concurrent with" shall be defined as follows:

- a) The availability of public facility capacity to support development concurrent with the impacts of such development shall be determined in accordance with the following:
 - i) For roads:
 - (1) The necessary facilities and services are in place at the time a development permit is issued; or
 - (2) The necessary facilities are under construction at the time a development permit is issued, and the necessary facilities will be in place when the impacts of the development occur; or
 - (3) Development permits are issued subject to the condition that the necessary facilities and services will be in place when the impacts of the development occurs; or
 - (4) The County has in place commitments to complete the necessary public facilities within six years.

CF-P24: No final development permit shall be issued by the County unless there shall be sufficient capacity of public facilities available to meet the standards for level of service for existing development and for the proposed development.

CF-P25: No preliminary development permit shall be issued by the County unless the applicant complies with one of the following policies:

- a) The applicant may voluntarily request a determination of the capacity of public facilities as part of the review and approval of the preliminary development permit.



- b) The applicant may elect to request approval of a preliminary development permit without a determination of capacity of public facilities provided that any such order is issued subject to requirements in the applicable land development regulation or to specific conditions contained in the preliminary development permit that:
 - i) Final development permits for the subject property are subject to a determination of capacity of public facilities, as required by GPO5.21.
 - ii) No rights to obtain final development permits, nor any other rights to develop the subject property have been granted or implied by the County's approval of the preliminary development permit without determining the capacity of public facilities.

CF-P26: Development permits shall be subject to the following requirements:

- a) The determination that facility capacity is available shall apply only to specific uses, densities, and intensities based on information provided by the applicant and included in the development permit.
- b) The determination that facility capacity is available shall be valid for the same period of time as the underlying development permit, including any extensions of the underlying development permit.
- c) The standards for level of service of public facilities shall be applied to the issuance of development permits on the following geographical basis: Roads - applicable roads and areas impacted by the proposed development.

CF-P27: The County shall develop, adopt, and use implementation programs which integrate its Land Use planning and decisions with its planning and decisions for public facility capital improvements.

CF-P28: The County and each municipality in the county may establish a countywide process for siting essential public facilities of region-wide significance. This process may include:

- a) An inventory of needed facilities
- b) A method of fair share allocation of facilities
- c) Economic and other incentives to jurisdictions receiving such facilities
- d) A method of determining which jurisdiction is responsible for each facility
- e) A public involvement strategy
- f) Assurance that the environmental and public health and safety are protected



CF-P29: The County may develop and adopt regulations that ensure that the facility siting is consistent with the adopted County Comprehensive Plan, including:

- a) The Future Land Use Map
- b) The Capital Facilities Plan Element and budget
- c) The Utilities Element
- d) The Transportation Element
- e) The Housing Element
- f) The Rural and Resource Lands Element
- g) The Economic Development Element
- h) The comprehensive plans of adjacent jurisdictions that may be affected by the facility siting
- i) Regional general welfare considerations

CF-P30: Essential public facilities sited outside of urban growth areas must be self-supporting and not require the extension, construction, or maintenance of urban services and facilities.

CF-P31: The County and each municipality in the county shall designate urban growth areas and encourage adequate public facilities and services concurrent with development.

CF-P32: Level of service for public facilities in the unincorporated portion of the urban growth areas shall be the same as the County's adopted standards.

CF-P33: New municipal urban public facilities (central sewage collection and treatment, public water systems, urban street infrastructure, and stormwater collection facilities) will not be extended beyond urban growth area boundaries for residential development. Water service - public or private - may be provided beyond urban growth area boundaries. This policy does not apply to storm water drainage.

CF-P34: 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, or limited areas of more intensive rural development to the extent elsewhere permitted), on property located outside of a 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.

CF-P35: Electric and natural gas transmission and distribution facilities may be sited within and through areas of Kittitas County both inside and outside of municipal boundaries, urban growth areas, master planned resorts, and limited areas of more intensive rural development, including to and through rural areas of Kittitas County.



CF-P36: Financing providers of public facilities are responsible for paying for their facilities. Providers may use sources of revenue that require users of facilities to pay for a portion of the cost of the facilities. As provided by law, some providers may require new development to pay impact fees or mitigation payments for a portion of the cost of public facilities.

CF-P37: The County may enter into interlocal-joint planning agreements, contracts, memorandums of understanding, or joint ordinances with municipalities and other providers of public facilities to coordinate consistent planning for and development of the urban growth area.

CF-P38: If probable funding falls short of meeting existing capital facility needs based on the adopted level of service standards, the Land Use Element and any other applicable Elements shall be reassessed. After reassessment, adjustments shall be made to provide adequate facility provision for existing and future needs.



7 UTILITIES

7.1 Introduction

The Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan Utilities Element shall, at minimum, consist of the general location, proposed location, and capacity of all existing and proposed utilities, including but limited to, electrical lines, water bank, telecommunication lines, and natural gas lines.

The primary regulatory agency for most utilities in Washington State is the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC). The WUTC ensures that safe and reliable service is provided to customers at reasonable rates and regulates the rates and charges, services, facilities, and practices of most of Washington's investor-owned gas, electric, and telecommunication utilities. As defined by the WUTC, some utilities are considered a critical service, namely electricity and standard telephone, and must be provided "upon demand." To fulfill public service obligations, these utility providers must plan to extend or add to their facilities when needed. On the other hand, natural gas is not considered a necessity, but rather a utility of convenience. All utilities regulated by the WUTC are prohibited from passing the cost of new construction onto the existing rate base.

Federal agencies also play a role in regulating some of these utilities. For example, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulates telecommunications. In addition, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), an independent commission with the US Department of Energy, sets rates and charges for the transportation and sale of natural gas, and for the transportation of oil by pipeline, for the transmission and sale of electricity, and the licensing of hydroelectric power projects.

Local government also has a role in regulation for certain utilities, such as franchise agreements. However, the effort behind meeting Growth Management Act requirements is not primarily regulatory; rather it is to promote coordination and cooperation between jurisdictions and utility providers.

Virtually all land uses require one or more of the utilities discussed in this chapter. Local land use decisions drive the need for new or expanded utility facilities. In other words, utilities follow growth. Expansion of the utility systems is a function of the demand for reliable service that people, their land uses, and activities place on the systems.

7.2 Conditions and Trends

Kittitas County recognizes the vast array of utilities provided by various companies and government agencies. Utilities provided include electricity, natural gas, telephone, wireless, cable, and irrigation purveyors. Capital facility plans of utility providers available in Kittitas County are hereby adopted by reference to meet the requirements of identifying proposed facilities.



7.2.1 Existing Utility Companies

Kittitas County's Capital Improvement Plan includes an inventory of the utility providers in Kittitas County. The Capital Improvement Plan's existing utility providers inventory is updated annually, and each update is adopted by reference.

7.3 Goals and Policies

Each goal and policy has been assigned a unique identifier that indicates the Element where it is located, specifies whether it is a goal or a policy, and includes a sequential number for organization. For example:

U-G1 = Utilities Element, Goal 1

U-P1 = Utilities Element, Policy 1

7.3.1 Coordination with Jurisdictions

U-G1: Coordinate with the cities and towns throughout the county on utility planning.

- U-P1: Multi-jurisdictional utility facility coordination and cooperation should include efforts to coordinate the procedures of making specific land use decisions to achieve consistency in timing inter-jurisdictional coordination in the planning and provisions of utilities.
- U-P2: Community input should be solicited prior to County approval of utility facilities, which may significantly impact the surrounding community.
- U-P3: The County shall coordinate the formulation and periodic update of the Utilities Element and relevant implementing development regulations with adjacent jurisdictions.
- U-P4: Encourage joint electric utility construction standards for all electrical infrastructure constructed in the urban growth area. In the interim, Puget Sound Energy and the Kittitas County Public Utility District will allow the City of Ellensburg to review any new construction in the urban growth area.

7.3.2 Coordination with Utility Providers

U-G2: Coordinate with all utility providers.

- U-P5: Coordinate with other utilities to create a County-wide utilities location map using GIS mapping.
- U-P6: Within the urban growth areas, development of less than one acre in size would not be required under County ordinances to provide water systems to the properties for irrigation system water.



- U-P7: Advocate for avoiding, where possible, routing major electric transmission lines above 55 kilovolts through urban areas and critical areas.
- U-P8: On an annual basis, provide all private utility companies copies of the Kittitas County revised six-year Capital Facilities Plan, particularly the schedule of proposed road and public utility construction provides so that the companies may coordinate construction, maintenance, and other needs in an efficient manner.
- U-P9: Expansion of improvement of utility systems should be recognized primarily as the responsibility of the utility providing the corresponding service.
- U-P10: Additions to and improvements of utilities facilities will be allowed to occur at a time and in a manner sufficient to serve growth.
- U-P11: Provide timely and effective notice to utilities regarding construction, maintenance, or repair of streets, roads, highways, or other facilities, and coordinate such work with the serving utilities to ensure that utility needs are appropriately considered.
- U-P12: Kittitas County recognizes reclamation irrigation districts within Kittitas County as utilities. Kittitas County also recognizes smaller private and cooperative irrigation water providers, including but not limited to:
 - a) Westside Irrigation Company
 - b) Kittitas Reclamation District
 - c) Ellensburg Water Company
 - d) Olson Ditch
 - e) Taneum Ditch Company
 - f) Bull Ditch Company
- U-P13: The Kittitas County's plan for utility facilities will be formulated, interpreted, and applied in a manner consistent with and complimentary to the serving utility's public service obligations.

7.3.3 Regional Coordination and Demand

U-G3: Decisions made regarding utility facilities should be consistent with and complementary to regional demand and resources and should reinforce an interconnected regional distribution network.

- U-P14: Kittitas County encourages the extension of utilities to major industrial developments.
- U-P15: Utilities may be extended to serve a master planned resort or which is approved pursuant to County Comprehensive Plan policies and development regulations, so long as all costs associated with utility and service extension and capacity increases directly attributable to the master planned resort are fully borne by the resort or



community. To the extent state law (including without limitations a tariff filed with the WUTC) requires contrary cost allocations, such state law shall control.

7.3.4 Permits and Easements

U-G4: Efficiently and transparently process permits for utility maintenance and expansion.

U-P16: Any and all easement rights shall be acquired under normal lawful procedures. Process permits and approvals for all utility facilities in a fair and timely manner, and in accordance with the development regulations that ensure predictability and project concurrency. Trespass on utility easements shall be discouraged. Kittitas County reserves the right to review all applications for utilities placed within or through the County for consistency with local policies, laws, customs, and culture.

U-P17: It is the position of Kittitas County that it is inappropriate for utilities to over or under build other utilities. A specific example of such requirements may be found in RCW 35A.14.900 and other state laws.

7.3.5 Reduce Hazardous Risks

U-G5: Kittitas County should reduce the risk of accidents caused by hazardous liquid pipelines, natural gas lines, sewer lines, and other potential hazardous materials, which are conveyed both above and below ground.

U-P18: Kittitas County will address hazardous liquid pipelines, natural gas lines, sewer lines, and other potentially hazardous materials through the County's development regulations. The development regulations shall include the specific addition or restriction of these and associated uses as well as the possible adoption of performance standards for siting, maintenance, and monitoring. These performance standards shall include best management practices.

7.3.6 Right of Way

U-G6: Facilitate the use and maintenance of the right-of-way responsibly and efficiently.

U-P19: The County should promote the joint use of transportation rights-of-way and other corridors consistent with the underlying private property rights and easement limitations. Appropriately place utility facilities within public rights-of-way, where feasible.

U-P20: Kittitas County recognizes that some County easements and rights-of-way provide current and historic water conveyance. Kittitas County also recognizes the damage done to roadways by some of these conveyances. Kittitas County will allow current conveyances where properly maintained and operated but will assume no liability or responsibility for delivery of irrigation water, including maintenance of ditches, unless conducive to good roadside management practices. New irrigation



conveyances may be installed within the County easement or right-of-way but must be separated from the County roadside ditch.

7.3.7 Energy Production Facilities

U-G7: Plan for, coordinate, and allow the expansion of solar production, small nuclear and wind facilities to improve the resilience of Kittitas County. Ensure codes encourage upfront mitigation for project impacts and are properly sited.

- U-P21: Continue to recognize and designate properties in the county that are suitable locations of solar power production facilities.
- U-P22: Continue to preserve prime agricultural land by designating areas of the county that are appropriate for the siting of solar power and other types of production facilities.
- U-P23: Require written notification to the Department of Defense when the County receives application for an energy plant or alternative energy resource.
- U-P24: Complete a study to identify where uses such as solar, wind, and battery storage are most likely to be proposed in the future. Update codes to reflect study findings.
- U-P25: Balance where uses are permitted or conditionally permitted with stakeholder and community feedback.
- U-P26: Where permitted. update codes to upfront identify studies and project mitigation to provide a more streamlined permitting process.



8 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

8.1 Introduction

Economic Development has the potential to create and maintain a strong and vibrant local economy, while further supporting a high quality of life. By encouraging a greater number and variety of economic opportunities, Kittitas County residents will benefit from increased services and well-paying employment opportunities within the community in which they live.

Within Kittitas County, economic development can be defined as public and private initiatives that promote job creation, business retention and recruitment, increase goods and services to residents and businesses, and provide job training programs; all of which combine to develop a stronger tax base.

The purpose of this Element is to outline the goals and policies for economic growth and vitality that will enhance the county's character and quality of life. Supporting economic development will assist in the attraction and retention of business and industry within Kittitas County.

8.2 Economic Development Plans

In collaboration with the cities and Chamber of Commerce, Kittitas County completed a new Countywide Economic Development Strategic Plan in February 2023. Some of the most important findings and policies relevant to the Comprehensive Plan have been included below.

8.2.1 Findings from Economic Development Strategic Plan

Kittitas County is widely regarded as a desirable place to live, thanks to its scenic landscapes, outdoor recreation opportunities, and small-town character. However, these qualities have attracted a growing number of new residents, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, when remote workers sought refuge from urban areas. This influx has driven up housing costs, making the county increasingly unaffordable for many long-time residents. As a result, some workers now live outside the county to find more affordable housing.

To address these challenges, strategic planning will be essential. Increasing housing supply and density within cities and towns, rather than encouraging sprawl, can help preserve the county's character while improving affordability. The county's central location—less than 100 miles from Seattle and Tacoma—offers economic opportunities beyond housing. Investments in transportation infrastructure could position Kittitas County as a hub for logistics and distribution, while tourism and recreation-related industries, such as brewing, outfitting, and arts, could be further developed to create higher-quality jobs.

Growth also brings risks to natural resources, agricultural lands, and the local way of life. Unchecked development threatens farmland, increases traffic, and strains ecosystems. To mitigate these impacts, community planning should focus on urban centers, targeted infrastructure investments, and support



for farmers facing rising property taxes and succession challenges. By balancing growth with preservation, Kittitas County can maintain its unique character while fostering economic resilience.

Kittitas County faces challenges in retaining young talent, particularly graduates from CWU, due to limited career opportunities and a lack of industry diversity. While healthcare, education, retail, and hospitality dominate the local job market, there is potential to expand into sectors such as light manufacturing, tourism, aviation, craft brewing, agriculture innovation, and logistics. Existing assets like Bowers Field (ELN) and Snoqualmie Pass, combined with CWU's programs in brewing, aviation, and agriculture business, provide a strong foundation for economic diversification and deeper university-industry collaboration.

To achieve a more resilient and sustainable future, the County must improve coordination among local governments, organizations, and economic development partners. Current challenges include overlapping roles, gaps in key functions, poor communication, limited resources, and a lack of trust and shared vision. Strengthening collaboration through clear role definition, unified messaging, and joint efforts in areas like grant funding, business development, and entrepreneurship will be critical for addressing growth, housing affordability, and economic diversification while preserving the County's natural resources.

8.2.2 Key Policy Recommendations from the Strategic Plan

The Economic Development Strategic Plan establishes goals to strengthen economic resilience and vitality across the County. These goals align with the Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan, which shares objectives for economic resilience and land use planning. While the Comprehensive Plan sets general economic development goals and explains their impact on land use, the Strategic Plan dives deeper into business development, industry growth, and business retention, areas where other County departments may play key roles.

The five goals established in the Economic Development Strategic Plan are:

Collaboration	Focuses on uniting upper and lower County governments and organizations behind shared objectives, improving coordination among economic development entities, promoting the County's identity, and strengthening partnerships with CWU, local governments, and businesses.
Economic Development	Aims to provide residents with tools and resources for employment and entrepreneurship by aligning workforce development with employer needs, expanding CWU-employer partnerships, and enhancing entrepreneurial support networks.
Balanced Growth	Aims to provide residents with tools and resources for employment and entrepreneurship by aligning workforce development with employer needs, expanding CWU-employer partnerships, and enhancing entrepreneurial support networks.



Community Investment	Emphasizes building infrastructure to meet current and future needs, engaging the public on economic infrastructure benefits, prioritizing investments in transportation, aviation, and utilities, and exploring innovative funding models.
Preservation	Underscores protecting and leveraging the County's agricultural legacy and natural assets for future generations by supporting local farmers, fostering knowledge-based industries tied to outdoor recreation and sustainability, and preserving community character through thoughtful planning.

8.2.3 Emerging Market Opportunities from the Strategic Plan

Tourism, Arts, and Entertainment

Visitors are increasingly drawn to Kittitas County for its natural beauty, diverse outdoor activities, rodeos, arts, and cultural events. Expanding amenities and strengthening the county's identity will help grow this sector.

Outdoor Recreation and Manufacturing

The County's extensive outdoor recreation assets—such as hiking, skiing, snowmobiling, and fishing—create opportunities for supporting these activities and fostering local recreation equipment manufacturing.

Aviation Manufacturing and Training

CWU's aviation programs and Bowers Field (ELN) are key assets. Beyond training, there is potential to develop an aviation light-manufacturing sector to complement these programs.

Beverage Arts

With a strong tourism base, nearby hops production, and existing craft breweries, wineries, and cideries, the county offers ideal conditions for expanding the beverage industry and related artisan ventures.

Innovative Timber Industries

The county's timber resources present opportunities in biomass and cross-laminated timber production. Partnerships with construction firms could advance this emerging sector.

Agriculture and Land Resiliency/Sustainability

Extreme weather and wildfire risks challenge agriculture industry and have increased the threat of wildfire events. The County has already made strides in securing its water sources and can be a leader in innovative agriculture and land management practices.



Logistics and Distribution

Kittitas County's long-standing role as an export hub for hay positions it well for broader logistics and distribution opportunities, leveraging its strategic location as a key supply chain connection point.

8.3 Conditions, Trends, and Needs

8.3.1 Household Income

As reported within the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimate, the median household income in Kittitas County in 2023 was \$69,928, which is less than the reported median household income of \$94,952 in Washington State over the same period (**Table 8-1**).

Table 8-1: Household Income, Kittitas County (ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2023)

	Kittitas County		Washington State	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than \$25,000	3,430	17.50%	344,344	11.40%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	1,392	7.10%	160,090	5.30%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	2,627	13.40%	259,768	8.60%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	2,921	14.90%	441,001	14.60%
75,000 to \$99,999	3,469	17.70%	860,859	28.50%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	3,430	17.50%	344,344	11.40%
\$150,000 or more	1,392	7.10%	160,090	5.30%
Median household income (dollars)	\$69,928		\$94,952	

Source: ACS 2019-2023 5-Year Estimates, Table S1901

In 2014, CWU Department of Public Affairs conducted a study on the economic impact of the University on Kittitas County (this study was based on the conclusions of a prior study conducted by ECONorthwest in 2009). Both studies concluded that the presence of CWU plays a significant role in boosting Kittitas County household incomes, effectively stabilizing the local economy. These effects are largely experienced outside the purview of the ACS estimates. In 2014, one in nine jobs in Kittitas County was at CWU with \$91 million in payroll. The 50,000-yearly individuals CWU draws to local restaurants, hotels, and retail businesses suggests a higher potential income than that identified within the 2015 ACS.

8.3.2 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis

Kittitas County, cities, local chamber of commerce and business owners adopted an Economic Development Strategic Plan in 2023. As part of this planning effort, the steering committee completed a revised Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis. Refer to the City County Economic Development Strategic Plan for more information.



Employment Growth and Distribution

Unemployment in Kittitas County and Washington State are both at 4.5%. Kittitas County has a smaller percentage of participants in the labor force. While this can be attributed, in part, to CWU students living in Kittitas County, it also points to a growing future demand in available job opportunities for students and other populations entering the workforce.

Major Employment Industries

Education and health care are the greatest industry employers, both in Kittitas County and Washington State (**Table 8-2**). While true, Kittitas County has a significantly greater proportion of its population employed in education and health care than Washington State. Kittitas County also employs a higher percentage of people in the fields of art, food, entertainment, agriculture, fishing, and mining. These spikes in specific employment sectors can be linked to the rural character of Kittitas County and the resource-based industries that come with this character, blending with urban entertainment centers brought about by cities and CWU.

Minor Employment Industries

Manufacturing industries and scientific and professional industries are noticeably lower in Kittitas County than in comparison with the rest of Washington State. Both industries are more than 5% lower than the state average. In part, this may be attributed to the lack of land within Kittitas County where the manufacturing of goods is an accepted or permitted use. CWU's emphasis on programs oriented around education and teaching may also play a role.

Table 8-2: Civilian Employment by Industry

Industry	Kittitas County		Washington State	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Agriculture, forestry, fishing/hunting, and mining	1,460	8.1%	84,760	2.5%
Arts/entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services	3,593	20.1%	322,171	9.4%
Construction	1,350	7.5%	217,229	6.3%
Educational services, health care, and social assistance	5,146	28.6%	774,071	22.6%
Finance/Insurance, real estate, rental, leasing	420	2.3%	159,021	4.6%
Information	546	3.0%	182,847	5.3%
Manufacturing	632	3.5%	263,317	7.7%
Other services, except public administration	326	1.8%	98,679	2.9%
Professional, scientific, management of companies and enterprises, administrative services	741	4.1%	537,150	15.7%
Public administration	961	5.4%	153,865	4.5%
Retail trade	1,680	9.4%	336,391	9.8%



Industry	Kittitas County		Washington State	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	466	2.6%	168,298	4.9%
Wholesale trade	606	3.4%	135,235	3.9%
Total	17,927		3,433,034	

Source: *OnTheMap Work Area Profile Analysis (employed in Kittitas County and Washington state, in 2022)*

Tourism

The County adopted a revised Tourism Strategic Plan in June 2025. Here are the following key observations from domestic travel and tourism reports:

- With \$359 million total in visitor spending county-wide and \$187 million in Ellensburg, domestic overnight visitation represents a significant industry for the county.
- Kittitas County hosts 1.3 million overnight trips representing 2.7 million total visit nights while Ellensburg hosts 364k overnight trips representing 811k total visit nights.
- Both the county's and city's tourism "season" is strongest from July–December with a significant drop-off in overnight visitation creating a shoulder season from January through June. Snoqualmie Pass is the exception that does not experience a significant drop off in visitation during the winter/spring seasons.
- Approximately 85% of overnight visitors stay 1–2 days in the county and Ellensburg.
- Approximately 57% of visit nights come from households with a median income of greater than \$90k with an additional 34% coming from households with a median income range of \$61–90k.

Small Business Opportunities

Small Business Association (SBA) loans can be viewed as another indicator of economic development within Kittitas County. Between 2021 and 2025 the number of SBA loans given to recipients in Kittitas County increased by 325% from 4 grants to 17. A comparable pattern was observed in Washington, where SBA grants rose by 212%. This is likely because of the stark decrease in business operations in 2020 from COVID-19 Pandemic and the gradual increase in business operations since 2021.¹⁴

Population Growth

The OFM estimates that there are approximately 48,600 people living in Kittitas County as of April 1, 2024. Between 2010 and 2024, the County had a total growth of 7,685 people, or approximately 18.8%. Overall, there has been a steady increase in population since 2010.

¹⁴ Small Business Administration; extracted from USASpending.gov



Kittitas County's growth target projects an increase of 12,021 people by 2046, a total population increase of approximately 24.7% to 60,621. This large increase is associated with unprecedented population growth in the state and in general, the Pacific Northwest region.

The Kittitas County Board of County Commissioners adopted an employment growth projection of 1,561 jobs between 2022-2046 for the unincorporated area of Kittitas County, including unincorporated urban growth areas. The Land Capacity Analysis ([Appendix F](#)) determined that Kittitas County has the capacity to meet the future overall employment growth. Results show that there is sufficient capacity in the County's unincorporated commercial and industrial zones to meet projected employment growth. The results of the Land Capacity Analysis found a projected employment capacity of 3,473 jobs. This leaves the County with a projected surplus of 1,912 jobs, providing sufficient capacity in the event the County exceeds its projected employment growth.

8.4 Goals and Policies

Kittitas County has established the following goals to guide future economic development. These goals were developed in response to existing economic conditions and identified needs within the county and support the County-Wide Planning Policies.

Each goal and policy has been assigned a unique identifier that indicates the Element where it is located, specifies whether it is a goal or a policy, and includes a sequential number for organization. For example:

E-G1 = Economic Development Element, Goal 1

E-P1 = Economic Development Element, Policy 1

8.4.1 Expansion of Local Businesses and Industries

E-G1: Support the retention and expansion of existing local businesses and industries.

- E-P1: Develop and maintain the infrastructure and public facilities needed to support economic activity and growth.
- E-P2: Establish and expand education, research, and other related activities that support existing local industries and businesses.
- E-P3: Develop partnerships and collaboration with other economic development organizations, the business community, other government entities, and educational institutions.
- E-P4: Promote tourism and tourist-based businesses to attract outside investment.
- E-P5: Develop a collaborative framework for the creation and implementation of local and regional economic development strategies.
- E-P6: Support a stable mix of industrial and service sector businesses.



- E-P7: Promote regional infrastructure coordination to facilitate regional growth and commerce, including rail for freight and passengers.
- E-P8: Collaborate with the private sector and local communities in actively improving conditions for economic growth and development.
- E-P9: Employ a strong marketing campaign through the establishment of County branding and promotion of the county as a great place to do business.
- E-P10: Ensure that the development review process is efficient and predictable.

E-G2: Explore options to grow outdoor recreational opportunities within the county, such as partnerships, code updates, staffing opportunities, and coordination.

- E-P11: Use studies that assess opportunities and challenges for recreational opportunities to find potential solutions.
- E-P12: Engage stakeholders to isolate or define recreational areas and build greater identity and branding around their unique features.
- E-P13: Engage stakeholders in discussions about the potential benefits and impacts of recreation industry growth to plan for mitigation efforts ahead of implementing actions.
- E-P14: Consider how new large scale recreational opportunities will provide options for multi-model transportation options to decrease impacts on county roads, where feasible.

E-G3: Promote economic development and job growth through coordination with Kittitas County Economic Development, the cities, and CWU.

- E-P15: Complete a study to identify the opportunities and challenges of economic development and job growth within the county.
- E-P16: Based upon the findings from recent or newly completed studies, update development regulations to remove barriers and incentivize uses, as necessary.
- E-P17: Through Kittitas County Economic Development and cities, consider options to jointly fund campaigns to recruit businesses to the county.
- E-P18: Build relationships and recruit employers from target job sectors like tourism, recreation, aviation manufacturing and training, timber industries, agriculture, and beverage sectors.
- E-P19: Engage and work with the Kittitas County Economic Development, CWU, and the City of Ellensburg on a strategic plan to attract businesses which align with and support graduates of CWU to grow economic opportunities, support CWU, and provide increased job opportunities for graduates within the county.



8.4.2 Diversify Industry

E-G4: Recruit new business and industries to foster a strong and diverse base of jobs and wages.

- E-P20: Develop strategies for attracting large economic generators such as manufacturing and industrial uses and technological companies.
- E-P21: Increase or support the creation/retention of home-based businesses.
- E-P22: Encourage flexible office developments that act as small business “incubators”; office share space.
- E-P23: Support start-up businesses with technical assistance for County-supported economic development initiatives.

8.4.3 Protect Rural Character

E-G5: Encourage economic growth while protecting the rural character of the county.

- E-P24: Support the long-term sustainability of natural resource-based activities.
- E-P25: Enhance opportunities for recognition of farming and ranching in the community, such as Farm to Table and harvest festivals.

8.4.4 Balance Employment and Housing

E-G6: Promote a balance of employment opportunities and housing.

- E-P26: Develop and maintain a strong labor force through access to housing and educational and training programs that meet the needs of local businesses.

8.4.5 Maximize Land and Infrastructure Use

E-G7: Encourage the full economic use of commercial and industrial lands, buildings, and infrastructure.

- E-P27: Encourage the redevelopment and infill development of underutilized properties.
- E-P28: Develop intergovernmental cooperation for shared infrastructure and services.
- E-P29: Encourage industrial or technological parks in urban growth areas by providing supporting infrastructure and utilities.



8.4.6 Support Aviation Industry

E-G8: Protect the viability of the airport as a significant economic resource to the community by encouraging compatible land uses, densities, and reducing hazards that may hinder economic viability of the airport.

E-P30: Encourage economic development opportunities and aviation related uses adjacent to airports and promote the efficient mobility of goods and services region-wide, consistent with the Economic Development Element and the Regional Transportation Strategy.

8.4.7 Cultural Resources

E-G9: Enhance cultural resources through economic development initiatives.

E-P31: Support arts and heritage organizations, public art, and historic properties.

8.4.8 Environmental Stewardship

E-G10: Ensure that the local economy is resilient to climate disruption and fosters business opportunities associated with climate mitigation and adaptation.

E-P32: Support the remediation of environmentally contaminated sites into productive uses.

E-P33: Foster parks and recreation resources to leverage community assets and/or local events to grow the local economy (e.g., natural amenities, cultural events, etc.)



9 RECREATION, PARKS, AND OPEN SPACE

9.1 Introduction

Being centrally located and easily accessed by two interstate highways, Kittitas County has become a recreational destination for many people. Both public and privately-owned land and facilities are utilized throughout the year from snow skiing and hunting in the winter to fishing, hiking, and river floats in the summer.

As illustrated in the Land Use Element, approximately 73% of Kittitas County is owned by state and federal agencies (Public Lands). These lands, particularly the Wenatchee and Snoqualmie National Forest, L.T. Murray and Quilomene Wildlife Areas, and the DNR trust lands, offer the public the greatest opportunity for outdoor recreation. In total, Kittitas County has designated 87,478 acres as Public Recreation on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map.

9.1.1 Supporting Plans

In the past 10 years, Kittitas County has adopted several plans which contribute to the betterment of outdoor recreation, parks, public lands, and open space. The most important plans as they relate to this element are:

- Kittitas County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan
- 2025 Kittitas County Tourism Strategic Plan
- 2023 City-County Economic Development Strategic Plan (See Economic Development Element)
- 2021 Kittitas County Recreation and Tourism Plan
- 2016 Kittitas County Tourism Infrastructure Plan

The goals articulated across Kittitas County's tourism, recreation, and infrastructure plans are unified by a vision of sustainable growth, community benefit, and the preservation of the county's unique character. The plans aim to balance the economic opportunities presented by tourism with the need to protect natural resources, maintain infrastructure, and enhance the quality of life for residents. Central objectives include managing visitor impacts and strengthening infrastructure, particularly in high-traffic areas, by investing in trail connectivity, expanding outdoor access, and upgrading facilities such as event centers and recreation complexes. The County seeks to diversify tourism beyond traditional hotspots, encouraging year-round visitation and dispersing benefits to smaller communities. There is a strong emphasis on collaboration among public agencies, local businesses, and community organizations to ensure that tourism development aligns with local priorities and values.



The plans also prioritize the conservation of environmental, historical, and cultural resources, supporting the development of parks, trails, and open spaces that serve both residents and visitors. Goals include promoting healthy and active lifestyles through accessible recreation programs, preserving wildlife habitats and open spaces, and supporting cultural arts and historical preservation. Financial sustainability is addressed through innovative funding strategies, joint ventures, and coordinated resource management. Public engagement and input are foundational, with ongoing efforts to incorporate community feedback into planning and implementation. Ultimately, these plans strive to position Kittitas County as a premier destination that leverages its natural beauty, heritage, and recreational assets, while ensuring that tourism growth is managed responsibly and delivers lasting benefits to the community.

The PROS Plan establishes a detailed list of goals and policies that were developed in the following categories:

Kittitas County's strategic role – The purpose of this goal is to establish a strategic approach to determine when and where Kittitas County should assume a lead role in the provision of recreation opportunities and when it can and should participate in the coordination of the efforts of other entities with similar missions.

Recreation Program goals – The purpose of this goal is to establish policies that will assist in the promotion of healthy lifestyles for Kittitas County residents.

Cultural Arts goals – This goal is intended to promote diversified cultural arts facilities and programs throughout Kittitas County.

Resource conservation goals – The focus of this goal is to plan, coordinate, and preserve unique environments including wetlands, fish and wildlife habitats, open spaces, forestlands, and scenic areas.

Historical preservation goals – This goal seeks to assist in the planning, coordination, and preservation of places and areas of historical significance when it is appropriate for the County to do so.

Goals for the establishment and maintenance of trail systems – This goal covers the planning, development, and operation of a wide variety of trail types, including hiking, bicycle, off-road vehicles (ORVs), and horse-riding opportunities.

Goals for the establishment and maintenance of resource-oriented park sites and facilities – This goal focuses on the planning, development, and operation of facilities to encourage resource-oriented recreation such as fishing, hunting, boating, camping, and swimming.

Goals for playgrounds and fields – This goal supports the development of an integrated system of playgrounds, courts, and fields throughout Kittitas County.



Goals for recreation facilities – This goal focuses on providing an array of indoor facilities, ranging from swimming pools and gymnasiums to facilities for arts and crafts, classrooms, and meeting rooms.

Goals for special purpose facilities that may not be provided or managed by other entities, such as the Ellensburg Water Park – The goal is to provide a coordination or support role to public and private agencies that provide services and opportunities that are not clearly defined or provided by traditional County services or agencies, ranging from the Nature Conservancy to the Washington State Horse Park.

Goals for establishing design standards to ensure safety and accessibility – This goal is intended to ensure that all Kittitas County facilities are designed to be safe, accessible, and easy to maintain throughout the life of the facility.

Goals and policies for identifying and managing the financial resources needed to acquire, maintain, and manage PROS facilities – The purpose of this goal is to develop guidelines that will ensure facilities are developed and operated in a manner that provides the greatest public benefits for the least cost and to ensure that costs are distributed equitably.

9.2 Conditions, Trends, and Needs

9.2.1 Spring/Summer Opportunities

The Yakima River, with its headwaters located in Kittitas County, provides an abundance of recreational opportunities to county residents and tourists. Ranked by many as one of the west's top natural fisheries, the Yakima River attracts many sports fishermen from around the state, as well as local citizens. In addition to the Yakima River, a number of lakes, streams, and creeks provide great fishing potential for county residents and tourists.

In addition to sports fishing opportunities, the Yakima River is utilized by many county residents for river floats. In response to the increasing public use the Bureau of Land Management has improved a number of recreational sites within the Yakima River Canyon. The Roza Dam Recreational Facility provides sanitary facilities, waste receptacles, picnic areas, and a boat launch for users of the Yakima River.

Kittitas County provides the only improved, non-fee boat launch facility to the Columbia River in the county. This facility is located within the Vantage town site and provides sanitary facilities, picnic areas, and waste receptacles. Although most heavily used from late spring to early fall, this launch is open year-round.

The vast number of public lands in Kittitas County offers citizens opportunities for hiking, camping, biking, horseback riding, and ORV activities throughout the year. The L.T. Murray Wildlife Area (owned and managed by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife [WDFW]) is perhaps the most widely used for these purposes. To promote non-motorized transportation, Kittitas County has provided a bike lane on Umptanum Road to Irene Rinehart Park and a pedestrian path on Airport Road to Bowers Field.



Various park projects have been developed. The Coal Mines Trail is an example of the development of a multi-jurisdiction regional trail, which follows the old rail corridor between Cle Elum, Roslyn to Ronald. While the trail is managed by a six member Trail Commission, the trail is owned by the three jurisdictions through which it passes: Cle Elum, Roslyn, and Kittitas County. The property was acquired in 1994. Development of the trail and trailheads is underway, and improvements are continuing.

Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission operate and maintain several parks in Kittitas County, including, but not limited to, Easton, Olmsted, and Ginkgo State Parks. Also, the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail (FKA John Wayne Pioneer Trail) is operated and maintained by the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission. The Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail provides citizens of Kittitas County with a non-motorized transportation route.

9.2.2 Fall/Winter Opportunities

Large areas of Kittitas County provide excellent opportunities for county residents as well as non-residents to hunt with modern firearms, muzzleloaders, and archery equipment for a variety of big and small game animals, migratory waterfowl, and numerous other game birds as defined by the WDFW. There are ten Game Management Units in Kittitas County designated by the WDFW for hunting deer, elk, bear, and cougar as well as special permit areas for deer, elk, bighorn sheep, and mountain goat. The various hunting seasons begin in August and end in March with defined time periods for each species of game animals and game birds. The Yakima River also provides ample opportunities for the winter sport of fishing for whitefish which are abundant.

Other popular fall and winter recreational activities in Kittitas County are downhill and cross-country skiing. There are three private ski facilities located at Snoqualmie Pass, offering downhill and cross-country skiing and snowboarding areas for the public.

Sno-Parks provide county residents and tourists with parking areas to access snow mobile, snow shoeing, and cross-country skiing areas. The Washington State Parks Department currently provides a number of Sno-Parks within Kittitas County. Under a maintenance agreement with the Washington State Parks Department, Kittitas County maintains five of these Sno-Parks. This includes: Kachess Lake Road, Salmon La Sac Road, Teanaway Road, Reecer Creek Road, and Naneum Road. Kittitas County owns and maintains the Evergreen Sno-Park.

9.2.3 Future Recreational Opportunities

As the population of Kittitas County grows, the county is experiencing an increased demand for improved recreational facilities and parks for county residents and tourists. To provide for the possible increased demands, Kittitas County is partnering and working with various government entities to fund various opportunities for parks and recreational facilities. Kittitas County has already achieved inter-jurisdictional parks/recreation projects with the various governments through establishment of the West Ellensburg Park, the Upper Kittitas County Youth Baseball Association Complex in Cle Elum, and the City of Cle Elum Skate Park.



During the course of the planning period, Kittitas County may conduct feasibility studies for the future parks within other urban growth areas. The foundation of the work contained in the County Recreation Plan/Outdoor Recreation Inventory, adopted by reference, also identifies future recreation opportunities for the county.

9.2.4 Recreational Safety

Kittitas County relies on the Sheriff's Department for increased services on or around key recreational destinations. The Sheriff's Department has a variety of equipment to support the various recreation activities available in Kittitas County.

9.2.5 Potential Impacts

As growth continues to occur both in the urban and rural areas of Kittitas County, there may be increased impacts on existing recreational areas and a demand for additional areas and opportunities. To address the potential demands and impacts, Kittitas County has taken the approach that incorporated communities should be primarily responsible for organized recreational opportunities and park systems, while the County is primarily responsible for the unorganized, passive recreational opportunities.

The 2016 PROS Plan identifies the projected growth of Western Washington counties and counties adjacent to Kittitas County as having a potential impact on Kittitas County recreation. This is because, according to the PROS Plan, the county's recreational opportunities are utilized at a high rate of demand by out-of-county tourists, and this tourism traffic is linked to the Interstate 90 and US-2 corridors. The Kittitas County Tourism Plan indicated that 33% of its respondents lived in the Puget Sound Region and another 18% lived in other parts of Western Washington, for a total of 51% of respondents. While growth within Kittitas County will require expanded recreational facilities and opportunities to maintain levels of service and quality of life for Kittitas

County residents and the expansion of facilities and opportunities for use by out-of-county residents will be important to the economic prosperity of the county for attracting tourism.

9.3 Future Projects

Table 9-1 is a summary table that captures all the projects that were identified in the 2016 PROS Plan as potential recreation and open space opportunities for Kittitas County in the future. Please refer to the 2016 PROS Plan for a comprehensive list of existing facilities as well as a more detailed description of the potential future projects.



Table 9-1: Potential Projects as Identified in the 2016 PROS Plan

Recreation/Open Space Category	Potential Project or Acquisition
Conservancies /Natural Resources – These are properties where conservation would be realized through the acquisition of development rights or outright acquisition for the purpose of preserving environmental resources, providing linkages between other open spaces, etc.	Gladmar Park Mountain to Sound Greenway at Cle Elum
Resource Parks – These properties primarily would provide public access to areas with significant environmental features, such as shorelines, woodlands, and scenic areas	Gladmar Park – waterfront access Kittitas County Event Center RV Park – campsites
Multipurpose Trails – These trails will generally provide for several modes of recreational and commuter use.	Skyline Trail Ellensburg Greenway Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail (FKA John Wayne Pioneer Trail) Reconnection River to Rodeo Trail McCabe Ringer Loop Reecer Creek Trail City Parks Trail (Reecer Creek Trail) BOR Trail Spray Fields Trail Hanson Pits Trail Wetlands Trail (Thrall Road) River Walk Trail (Umtanum Creek Rec Area) Yakima River Canyon Scenic Byway Trails Pacific Crest to Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail (FKA John Wayne Pioneer Trail)
On-road Bicycle Routes – The purpose is to create an integrated cycling network throughout the county.	U-Fish Road Kachess Dam Road/NF-4818 NF-4828/Kachess Lake Road Nelson Siding Road Bullfrog Road/Salmon LaSac Trailhead Cle Elum Valley Road/NF-4330 Upper Peoh Point Road/Thorp Highway Thorp Highway Thorp Cemetery Road



Recreation/Open Space Category	Potential Project or Acquisition
	Cove Road
	Canyon Road/SR-821
	Reecer Creek Road
	SR-10 Cle Elum – Ellensburg
	Bender/Sanders Roads/Alder Street
	Brick/Brick Mill Road
	Kittitas Highway
	Vantage Highway
	Wilson Creek/Number 6 Road
	Thrall Road/SR-821
	Boylston Road
	US-97 Ellensburg to Swauk Creek
	SR 970/US-97 Cle Elum to Leavenworth
On and Off-leash Dog Trails and Areas	Irene Rinehart Riverfront Park
	Rotary Park
Scenic Byways, Corridors, and Viewpoints	Cle Elum to Ellensburg on SR-10
	Vantage Highway
Skateboard/BMX Facilities	Ellensburg Kiwanis Park
	Ellensburg Rotary Park
Courts – Basketball, Volleyball, Tennis	Ellensburg Irene Rinehart Riverfront Park
	Ellensburg Mountain View Park
Fields – Football, Soccer, Baseball, and Softball	Cle Elum Four Seasons Aquatic Center
Swimming Facilities	Cle Elum Four Seasons Aquatic Center
Physical Conditioning Facilities	Ellensburg Community Center
Gymnasiums	Ellensburg Community Center
Meeting Rooms	Kittitas Valley Event Center Ellensburg Community Center
	Kittitas Valley Event Center Ellensburg Community Center
Community Centers – Youth, Teen, Senior	Ellensburg Community Center
Public Plaza and Streetscapes	CWU to downtown Ellensburg



9.4 Goals and Policies

Goals and policies within this Element have been divided into two subcategories based on their general intent. The goals and policies relate to Recreation, Parks, and Open Space as they work to address active and programmatic uses. It is important to note that these goals and policies are supported by the goals and policies in the tourism, recreation, and infrastructure plans adopted by the County between 2016-2025.

Each goal and policy has been assigned a unique identifier that indicates the Element where it is located, specifies whether it is a goal or a policy, and includes a sequential number for organization. For example:

RPO-G1 = Recreation, Parks, Open Space Element, Goal 1

RPO-P1 = Recreation, Parks, Open Space Element, Policy 1

9.4.1 Enhance and Expand Recreational Areas

RPO-G1: Kittitas County should encourage the enhancement of existing recreational areas and the development of new areas whenever feasible.

RPO-P1: Maintain public access for multiple uses on public lands.

RPO-P2: Support and encourage the purchase and dedication of lands by public or private organizations for Parks and Recreation.

RPO-P3: Recognize the important functions served by private and public open space, designate and map public and private open space of regional importance, and designate open space corridors within and around urban growth areas.

RPO-P4: Provide a land use designation for public and private open space of regional/statewide significance. These areas are identified because their recreational, environmental, scenic, cultural, and other open space benefits extend beyond the local area.

RPO-P5: Develop a program to identify and prioritize open space corridors and greenbelts within and between urban growth areas that include lands useful for recreation, wildlife habitat, restoration projects, trails, and connection of critical areas.

RPO-P6: Explore ways that a transfer of development rights program could contribute increased land for recreation and open space.

RPO-P7: Consider recreation access needs and opportunities with County land acquisition projects.



9.4.2 Planning and Coordination

RPO-G2: **Kittitas County should recognize, utilize, and improve upon existing plans, including the Kittitas County Parks, PROS Plan, 2021 Recreation and Tourism Plan, and the Kittitas County Tourism Infrastructure Plan.**

RPO-P8: Create and maintain a Comprehensive Recreation Plan which:

- a) Incorporates new parks/recreational areas into growth planning
- b) Establishes additional passive recreation sites and opportunities
- c) Formulates recreational guidelines
- d) Includes cooperation with County and city recreation districts and committees
- e) Creates a long-range vision for recreation

RPO-P9: Consider recreation needs and the services the County is able to provide by developing a Countywide Recreation Plan in coordination with other agencies and jurisdictions within Kittitas County. Recreation opportunities and facilities include, but are not limited to parks, trails, river access, public lands access, campgrounds, and picnic facilities.

RPO-P10: Support initiatives to create or improve the maintenance and rehabilitation of public parks and recreation spaces and facilities within the county, including spaces and facilities located within or near critical areas, floodplains and shorelines.

9.4.3 Funding

RPO-G3: **Kittitas County should adopt, financially support, and implement a Long-Range Vision and Strategic Plan for Kittitas County recreation. The vision and plan would guide development of recreation and related programs, taking into consideration the following:**

- a) Quality of life for county residents
- b) Recreation impacts on communities
- c) Community involvement in recreation
- d) Economic and environmental impacts of recreational tourism
- e) Cooperation with communities, other agencies or departments, landowners, and other stakeholders

RPO-P11: Promote private/nonprofit and public partnerships to finance capital improvements to public parks/recreational areas.

RPO-P12: Explore funding sources that may lead to more parks and recreation facilities and staffing possibilities managed by the County.



9.4.4 Education and Enforcement

RPO-G4: Kittitas County should provide education and enforcement to ensure a balance of safe recreational use, permitting, and protection of critical areas.

RPO-P13: Seek partnerships with The Nature Conservancy, Suncadia, Washington State Departments of Fish & Wildlife, Natural Resources, and Parks & Recreation Commission, US Forest Service, US Fish & Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Land Management for ways to educate on proper stewardship of lands and resources.

RPO-P14: Periodically review permitting of vital recreational facilities and reduce barriers, when identified.



10CLIMATE AND RESILIENCY

10.1 Introduction

10.1.1 Growth Management Act

Washington State legislation signed HB1181 into law in 2023. This bill added a climate goal to the Growth Management Act and requires local comprehensive plans to have a Climate Element. RCW 36.70a.070 requires the Climate and Resiliency Element of the Comprehensive Plan to “equitably enhance resiliency to, and avoid or substantially reduce the adverse impacts of climate change in human communities and ecological systems through goals, policies, and programs consistent with the best available science and scientifically credible climate projections and impact scenarios that moderate or avoid harm, enhance the resiliency of natural and human systems, and enhance beneficial opportunities”.

RCW 36.70a.070 outlines the required components of the Climate and Resiliency Element. The Element must prioritize actions that benefit overburdened communities that will disproportionately suffer from compounding environmental impacts and will be most impacted by natural hazards due to climate change. Goals, policies, and programs are required to focus on identifying, protecting, and enhancing natural areas and community resiliency to climate impacts. Therefore, the Element must outline how it plans to address natural hazards created or aggravated by climate change through a hazard mitigation or similar plan.

10.1.2 Statewide and Regional Consistency

Kittitas County's Climate Strategy emphasizes alignment with both regional and statewide initiatives to ensure resilience and sustainability.

The Washington State Climate Resilience Strategy

Developed by the Department of Ecology, the Washington State Climate Resilience Strategy provides an overarching framework for statewide climate preparedness. This strategy ensures Washington is equipped to prepare for, respond to, and recover from current and projected climate impacts in an integrated, equitable, and durable manner. Its goals focus on four pillars: fostering healthy and economically vibrant communities; advancing infrastructure that withstands climate disruptions; protecting and adaptively managing natural systems and working lands; and creating governance structures that promote collaboration, transparency, and flexibility. By aligning with these principles, Kittitas County supports statewide efforts to reduce risks, advance environmental justice, and deliver equitable outcomes while strengthening local resilience.



Climate Resilience Plan for Washington Agriculture

Developed by the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), provides a roadmap to maintain agricultural viability and vitality amid climate change. Informed by research and stakeholder input, the plan focuses on three priorities: safeguarding operations, the environment, and workers from climate impacts like drought and extreme weather; driving sector-wide innovation through research, education, and partnerships; and promoting voluntary adoption of climate-smart practices on farms. These strategies aim to ensure Washington's agriculture remains sustainable, competitive, and resilient while supporting public health, environmental stewardship, and economic strength.

Washington Habitat Connectivity Action Plan (WAHCAP)

Adopted by the Department of Fish and Wildlife in 2025, WAHCAP defines habitat connectivity as the ability of wildlife to move freely across landscapes to find food, shelter, and establish territories—critical for species survival as climate patterns shift. The plan underscores that without connected habitats, species may fail to adapt to changing conditions. Within Kittitas County, priority corridors have been identified running north-south in upper county named the Cascade Crest, north-south further East across Teanaway named the Eastern Cascades, and east-west across southern county named Cascades to Hanford. As part of this periodic update no land use changes are being considered in the county, which means no anticipated changes to occur around these priority corridors identified in the plan. The priority corridors largely fall in the County's rural lands which are largely held in federal ownership.

Yakima River Basin Integrated Water Resource Management Plan

This document serves as a cornerstone for water security and ecosystem health. This plan combines structural improvements, operational changes, and conservation measures to address climate variability. Actions include raising the Cle Elum Pool, constructing pipelines, and implementing agricultural water conservation programs to save up to 170,000 acre-feet annually. Habitat restoration is also prioritized, with 70,000 acres of riparian and shrub-steppe lands targeted for protection. These measures not only secure water for agriculture and municipalities but also support fish recovery and enhance resilience against drought and reduced snowpack—hazards identified as high-risk in the region.

Yakima Nation Climate Action Plan (CAP)

Kittitas County also collaborates closely with the Yakima Nation Tribe to integrate traditional ecological knowledge with scientific research. The Tribe's Climate Action Plan identifies wildfire, flooding, drought, and reduced snowpack as top hazards, all of which align with the County's vulnerability assessment. The Climate Action Plan also identifies the public health, infrastructure, agriculture, forestry, water, and wetlands as vital assets with unique actions in these areas. Kittitas County is taking a similar approach with planning for resilience against the identified priority hazards and focusing on key community assets. The plans share similar policies about education, grants, and additional studies for improvements.



10.1.3 Local Resilience

Kittitas County strongly supports the Kittitas County Conservation District (KCCD) which, prior to the adoption of the Climate and Resiliency Element, was already accomplishing local initiatives related to maintaining resilient working landscapes¹⁵ Some of the following programs have been particularly successful in helping agricultural and environmental groups in the county.

Kittitas County Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP)¹⁶

The Voluntary Stewardship Program achieved notable progress in improving water efficiency, habitat protection, and land management during this reporting period. Through the USDA's Regional Conservation Partnership Program, KCCD implemented sprinkler conversions under two major projects, initiating six producer contracts on 545 acres, with additional conversions funded by state grants. The Yakima Tributary Access & Habitat Program improved fish passage by removing barriers and installing screens on Coleman and Cherry Creeks. The Washington Shrub Steppe Restoration Initiative supported two grazing projects, introducing virtual fencing and wildlife-friendly fencing to restore habitat and reduce wildfire risk.

Yakima Tributary Access & Habitat Program (YTAHP)

The KCCD is a core team member of the Yakima Tributary Access & Habitat Program (YTAHP - "Y-Tap"). YTAHP is a voluntary program in which landowners and water right holders can come into compliance with current fish passage and screening laws with considerable cost sharing advantages—a win-win situation for native fish and landowners. Since 2003, YTAHP has implemented 133 projects, screened 190 cubic feet per second and added 217 miles of rearing and spawning habitat¹⁵.

Wildland Fire/Fuels Reduction

The KCCD was invited to help finish the County Wildfire Protection Plan with the Department of Natural Resources, fire chiefs from districts across the county and the Kittitas County Fire Marshal in 2008. Completion of County Wildfire Protection Plan was necessary to access grants for work with private landowners and led to securing hundreds of thousands of dollars for work on the ground to reduce fire danger and improve forest health. The county now has 18 recognized Firewise Communities/USA and hundreds of landowners have utilized cost share funding to reduce their wildfire risks¹⁵.

¹⁵ Kittitas County Conservation District, "Programs," accessed December 18, 2025, <https://www.kcccd.net/programs>.

¹⁶ Kittitas County Voluntary Stewardship Program Biennial Report: 2023 to 2025, prepared for Kittitas County Board of Commissioners and Washington State Conservation Commission, August 2025.



10.2 Existing and Future Conditions

Per the state requirement, Kittitas County must now plan for the impacts of climate-exacerbated hazards. These are hazards where future climate conditions will increase severity of the hazard such as increased temperature and length of heat waves or high-water levels in floods. A vulnerability assessment was conducted to determine the potential impacts of climate-exacerbated hazards on Kittitas County assets. See **Appendix J** for the full Vulnerability Assessment.

After reviewing potential exposure of Kittitas County assets to the type of hazards exacerbated by climate change, the following priority hazards were identified:

Priority Hazards	Potential Impacts
Extreme Heat	Higher temperatures can strain HVAC systems, increase cooling costs, increase strain on energy grid, decrease worker safety, reduce crop yields, and harm livestock.
Extreme Precipitation	Increased precipitation can increase stormwater runoff, water levels will fluctuate more, with higher levels earlier in the spring and low levels later in summer, when demand is high ¹⁷ .
Flooding	May raise river and stream water levels and threaten current water infrastructure which can result in crop loss, soil erosion, structural degradation of buildings, and delayed planting for agricultural practices.
Wildfire	Threatens infrastructure, habitat, and tourism and smoke can also cause detrimental health impacts to vulnerable populations.
Drought	Increased drought conditions will lower soil moisture, reduce biomass growth, and heighten erosion risks, impacting crop yields and quality.
Reduced Snowpack	Lower stream flows and extreme weather events will harm aquatic habitats, fish passage, and overall water quality.

10.2.1 Vulnerable Assets

Through examining existing reports and conducting local engagement, 191 County assets were identified. Top assets in the county include the County Courthouse and Public Safety Building, the Bloom Pavilion, the Cle Elum Transfer Station, CWU, and farms as a part of the agricultural industry.

What are assets?

For the context of this document, assets are a combination of people, resources, ecosystems, infrastructure, and services. The assets listed below are not all owned and operated by the County but are important to consider determining impacts to quality of life in the face of natural hazards exacerbated by climate change. Goals and Policies in this element primarily focus on County-owned

¹⁷ Climate Resilience Plan for Washington Agriculture, Washington Department of Agriculture, 2025



facilities or focus on supporting or coordinating with those that own other key assets in the community. The goals and policies are intended to help reduce risk and vulnerability or support others in that effort.

Priority Hazards	Vulnerable Assets*
Extreme Heat	Roads, Urban Developments, Hospitals, Parks, Farms
Extreme Precipitation	Irrigation facilities, Canals, Streams
Flooding	Roads, County Administrative Buildings, Development within the Floodplain
Wildfire	Police/Fire Stations, Forests, Hospitals, Electric Facilities
Drought	Farms, Recreation
Reduced Snowpack	Farms, Recreation

*The vulnerable assets listed here are just examples, not the full list. They are meant to help explain the goals and policies below.

10.2.2 Vulnerable Populations, Overburdened Communities, and Environmental Justice

Under the Growth Management Act, it is required to give special consideration to achieving environmental justice, avoid worsening environmental health disparities and climate impacts to vulnerable populations and overburdened communities¹⁸.

The most common vulnerable populations to extreme heat, wildfire, and other hazards are:

Children	Body temperature regulates less efficiently, making them more prone to heat stress and dehydration. Smoke exposure can worsen asthma and respiratory issues.
Senior Citizens	Age-related health conditions and reduced ability to regulate body temperature make seniors more susceptible to heat stroke. Smoke can aggravate chronic respiratory or heart conditions.
Pregnant Women	Extreme heat increases risks of dehydration, heat exhaustion, and complications such as preterm labor. Smoke exposure can harm fetal development.
Outdoor Workers	They work outdoors in high heat and smoky conditions, increasing risks of heat illness, respiratory problems, and reduced productivity. Limited access to healthcare and cooling facilities worsens vulnerability.
Students	Central Washington University students often live in dorms or older housing without air conditioning, making heat waves dangerous. Limited resources can restrict access to clean air spaces during wildfire smoke events.
Low-Income Families	Many low-income households lack air conditioning or live in older, poorly insulated homes, making extreme heat dangerous. Pre-existing health

¹⁸ Revised Code of Washington 36.70A.070 Comprehensive plans—Mandatory elements.



conditions are more common due to limited healthcare access, increasing risks from heat stress, smoke inhalation, and poor air quality. Recovery from disasters—such as replacing lost income, repairing homes, or relocating—is harder for those with fewer financial resources.

Overburdened Communities

The Washington Department of Ecology has identified at least one overburdened community within Kittitas County. The City of Ellensburg and census tract 9756 which extends outside the city of Ellensburg into the southwest corner of the urban growth boundary. Overburdened communities often experience higher exposure to air pollution and other pollutants and face cumulative impacts from climate-exacerbated hazards due to the lack of resources to prepare for potential impacts. Areas of Ellensburg showed an elevated level of particulate matter (PM) 2.5, fine inhalable particles, with diameters that are generally 2.5 micrometers and smaller¹⁹. While the community is currently in attainment with the national ambient air quality standards for criteria air pollution, it does experience high levels of PM 2.5, when compared to the rest of Washington State. The southeast portion of Ellensburg was identified as disadvantaged by the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) for workforce development. Although only the southwest portion of the city met the screening criteria, the area was expanded to include the census block groups for most of the city of Ellensburg, bounded by Interstate 90. This includes most of the population of Ellensburg, and the sensitive receptors like schools and healthcare facilities. The city is relatively small in area and past Department of Ecology mobile monitoring has shown pollution levels to be relatively consistent across the community.

Environmental Justice

Giving special considerations to achieving environmental justice would be continued collaboration with the City of Ellensburg to carefully plan for intentional growth in these areas. Ellensburg also has the highest population in the county, with pockets of manufacturing and industrial lands in the city and urban growth area. The County has established goals and policies to continue the planning efforts of the Ellensburg UGA into the future for land use, transportation, and housing benefits to the community.

10.3 Climate Related Focus Areas

As a part of the engagement process to inform this Comprehensive Plan update, stakeholders were asked to identify their priorities. Participants emphasized that climate resilience in Kittitas County will be dependent on the ability to balance growth with the protection of natural systems. Unmanaged development, particularly wildland-urban interface zones and floodplains, intensify exposure to climate hazards and place additional strain on already limited water resources.

A common priority among stakeholders for the next 20 years is shaping growth patterns that conserve habitat, safeguard agricultural lands, and reduce long-term vulnerability. This can look like anything from clearer guidance around water availability to strategic utility buildout to ensure development

¹⁹ US Environmental Protection Agency. "Particulate Matter (PM) Basics." EPA.gov. <https://www.epa.gov/pm-pollution/particulate-matter-pm-basics>.



aligns with hydrologic and ecological realities. When planning for growth, stakeholders also want to preserve agricultural land and reduce fragmentation.

Healthy ecosystems were identified as foundational to long-term climate resilience. Restoring salmon and whitefish populations in the Yakima River, reconnecting floodplains, and managing invasive grasses were cited as essential strategies that link ecological integrity with economic, cultural, and community benefits. Participants noted that climate-driven stressors such as drought, extreme heat, and declining forest health threaten these systems and require a coordinated, science-informed approach.

Collaboration with the Yakama Nation, including integration of traditional ecological knowledge, emerged as a critical opportunity to guide watershed stewardship and habitat adaptation to future climate conditions.

Transportation, access, and ecological connectivity were also key themes. Stakeholders noted that Interstate 90 congestion affects both emergency access and wildlife movement, and that expanded wildlife crossings and integrated habitat corridors would benefit public safety and ecological resilience alike. Walkable communities linked to open space and outdoor recreation were identified as part of the County's long-term vision for a climate-ready future.

Finally, participants emphasized that strengthening interagency coordination and building internal capacity are prerequisites for implementing climate adaptation efforts. Many priorities, such as floodplain upgrades, ecological restoration, wildfire mitigation, and water resource projects, require sustained collaboration among County departments, local cities, state and federal agencies, and the Yakama Nation. Stakeholders expressed strong support for establishing dedicated staff capacity, including a grant writer, to help secure funding and move climate initiatives from planning to implementation. Community education and consistent communication were also highlighted as critical components of fostering shared understanding and long-term public support.

10.4 Hazard Mitigation

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) approved the 2025 Kittitas County Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP). The plan is comprised of Volume 1, which includes the countywide planning elements, and Volume 2, the individual chapters for the 15 planning partners²⁰.

Central Washington University
City of Cle Elum
City of Ellensburg
City of Roslyn
Cle Elum–Roslyn School District
Kittitas County Conservation District
Kittitas County Fire District 1
Kittitas County Fire District 6

Kittitas County Fire District 7
Kittitas Public Utility District
Kittitas School District
Kittitas Valley Fire Rescue
Snoqualmie Pass Fire and Rescue
Snoqualmie Pass Utility District
Town of South Cle Elum

²⁰ Kittitas County Public Works, "Hazard Mitigation Plan," accessed December 18, 2025, <https://www.co.kittitas.wa.us/public-works/hazard-mitigation-plan/default.aspx>.



The goals of the Hazard Mitigation Plan are to

1. Protect life, property, and the environment
2. Continuously build and support local capacity to enable the public to mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover from the impact of hazards and disasters
3. Establish a hazard and disaster resilient economy
4. Promote public awareness, engage public participation, and enhance partnerships through education and outreach
5. Encourage the development and implementation of long-term, cost-effective mitigation projects

The plan emphasizes collaboration among local governments, agencies, and stakeholders to address hazards such as wildfires, floods, severe weather, and other climate-related risks. Public feedback is encouraged and will inform future updates.

10.5 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Kittitas County is not required to do a Greenhouse Gas Emissions reductions element under the GMA.

The city of Ellensburg and areas in the Ellensburg UGA were identified by the Department of Ecology as one of the 16 communities in Washington that are overburdened and highly impacted by air pollution criteria. Criteria air pollutants are six common air contaminants—particulate matter, ground-level ozone, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, and lead—regulated by the EPA under the Clean Air Act because they pose risks to human health and the environment. This means this area demonstrated higher levels of air pollution than the rest of Washington State.

While the intent of the Goals and Policies in this Climate and Resiliency Element are to increase climate resiliency, this plan update takes a comprehensive approach to lower greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate climate impacts. Emission reduction is not the responsibility of the Climate and Resiliency Element alone; goals and policies within the Housing; Economic Development; Transportation; Land Use; Recreation, Parks, and Open Space; and Utilities Elements work together to shape more efficient growth patterns. By coordinating land-use decisions, infrastructure investments, and community design across the entire Comprehensive Plan, cities create cohesion that reduces fuel consumption, limit sprawl, and support cleaner travel behavior, resulting in meaningful, system-wide reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Examples of multi-beneficial policies can be found across all Elements of the Comprehensive Plan. Specific examples of policy have been pulled from the Land Use and Transportation Elements to provide context. See the example policies below:

LU-G2: Promote the development of large-scale, high-intensity urban land uses within the urban growth area where there is supporting infrastructure.

T-G3: Complete, Multimodal, and Accommodates Outdoor Recreation: Fill gaps in the system to accommodate safe and enjoyable travel by those choosing to walk, bike, or use transit, including recreational users.



When counties promote compact, mixed-use neighborhoods, people live closer to jobs, services, and transit, reducing car dependence and shortening travel distances. Investments in multimodal options like public transit, biking, and walking further shift trips away from carbon-intensive vehicles.

10.6 Comprehensive Plan Integration

The Resiliency Sub-Element has three main requirements outlined in the Growth Management Act which are:

- (A) Identify, protect, and enhance natural areas to foster resiliency to climate impacts, as well as areas of vital habitat for safe passage and species migration;
- (B) Identify, protect, and enhance community resiliency to climate change impacts, including social, economic, and built environment factors, that support adaptation to climate impacts consistent with environmental justice; and
- (C) Address natural hazards created or aggravated by climate change, including sea level rise, landslides, flooding, drought, heat, smoke, wildfire, and other effects of changes to temperature and precipitation patterns²¹.

Several goals and policies in other elements contribute to addressing the protection of natural areas to foster resiliency to climate impacts (A) and enhance community resiliency to climate change impacts (B). Goals and policies from other elements that support in these efforts have been outlined in the table below.

Comprehensive Plan Element	Goals or Policies	Contribution to County Resilience
Land Use	LU-G3, LU-P8, LU-P16, LU-P17	Supporting green development and other sustainable development initiatives.
Land Use	LU-P21, LU-P22	Coordinate with state and federal agencies for the continued protection of open space and recreational lands.
Transportation	T-P9	Analyzing future transportation planning projects against potential climate impacts.
Transportation	T-P22	Coordinate with agricultural stakeholders to understand important transportation routes.

²¹ Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 36.70A.070 Comprehensive Plan – Mandatory Elements



Comprehensive Plan Element	Goals or Policies	Contribution to County Resilience
Transportation	T-G8, T-P31	Enhance active transportation facilities to connect urban, rural, and recreation. Analyze impacts of potential hazards on active transportation facilities.
Utilities	U-G7, U-P28, U-P29, U-P30	Support in the expansion of solar and wind facilities which can reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
Rural and Resource	RR-P23	Continue progressing the transfer of development rights program to direct growth and preserve natural areas.
Rural and Resource	RR-P26	Continue subarea planning efforts to closely review climate-related conditions unique to certain areas.
Economic Development	E-G10	Review economic development opportunities and their vulnerability to potential climate impacts.
Recreation, Parks, and Open Space	RPO-P12	Partner with agencies to help educate residents and visitors on the proper stewardship of natural areas.

10.7 Goals and Policies

Each goal and policy has been assigned a unique identifier that indicates the element where it is located, specifies whether it is a goal or a policy, and includes a sequential number for organization. For example:

CR-G1 = Climate and Resiliency Element, Goal 1

CR-P1 = Climate and Resiliency Element, Policy 1

10.7.1 Drought

CR-G1: Protect Kittitas County's rural communities, local economies, and outdoor recreation from drought.

CR-P1: Work with stakeholders to evaluate impacts of reduced snowpack on winter tourism and recreation and identify potential strategies.

CR-P2: Engage with agricultural and irrigation stakeholders to identify adaptation strategies to mitigate impacts from drought and reduced snowpack.

CR-P3: Support the local agricultural sector's efforts to adapt to changing climate conditions and capitalize on sustainable business opportunities.



CR-P4: Choose native drought- and pest-resistant trees, shrubs, and grasses in restoration efforts to support climate resilience.

10.7.2 Extreme Precipitation

CR-G2: Reduce risks from extreme precipitation to transportation systems, infrastructure, and property.

CR-P5: Monitor mapped transportation infrastructure that is vulnerable to repeated floods, landslides, and other natural hazards, and designate alternative travel routes for critical transportation corridors when roads must be closed.

10.7.3 Extreme Heat

CR-G3: Reduce heat-related risks and increase resilience in the community by implementing long term strategies for adaptation.

CR-P6: Monitor development regulations that incorporate best practices for reducing the risk of wildfire, extreme heat, flooding, and other climate-exacerbated hazards.

CR-P7: Ensure that tree species selection and planting guidance are updated to be resilient to climate change.

CR-P8: Work with energy utilities to improve the safety and reliability of infrastructure replace with during extreme heat events.

10.7.4 Flooding

CR-G4: Ensure no net loss of ecosystem composition, structure, and functions, especially in Priority Habitats and Critical Areas, and strive for net ecological gain to enhance climate resilience.

CR-P9: Identify and plan for climate impacts to value community assets such as parks and recreation facilities, including relocation or replacement.

CR-P10: Encourage the use of green infrastructure and low-impact development to address increased storm intensities and water runoff.

CR-P11: In areas with significant vulnerability to climate hazards, facilitate and support long-term community visioning including consideration relocating high-intensity land uses away from floodplains.

CR-P12: Protect significant historic sites prone to floods or other hazards worsened by climate change.

CR-P13: Support enhanced data collection for hazard events in greater magnitude than today, to increase preparedness.



CR-P14: Support the restoration and resiliency of stream crossings, including culverts and bridges, to higher peak flows.

CR-P15: Support the implementation of the Yakima River Basin Integrated Water Resource Management Plan.

10.7.5 Wildfire

CR-G5: Mitigate wildfire risk in Kittitas County by implementing strategic land-use planning, improving emergency preparedness, and strengthening critical infrastructure.

CR-P16: Identify and implement strategies for reducing wildfire risk in the wildland-urban interface.

CR-P17: Coordinate with private forest landowners to increase the climate resilience of forests and streams on their lands.

CR-P18: Analyze ways to enhance emergency preparedness, response, and recovery efforts to mitigate risks and impacts associated with extreme weather and other hazards worsened by climate change.

CR-P19: Create evacuation plans and outreach materials to help residents plan and practice actions that make evacuation quicker and safer.

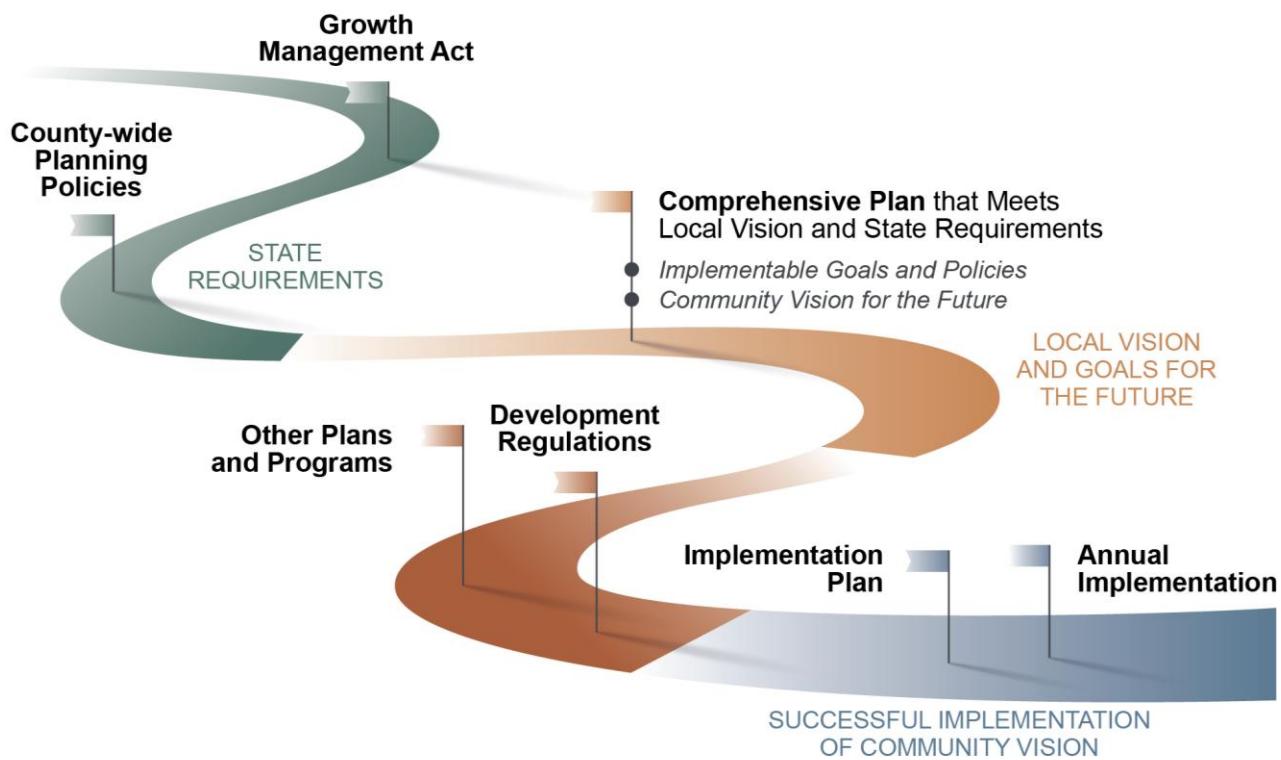
CR-P20: Incorporate post-wildfire debris flow and flooding hazard information into critical area delineation in fire-prone communities.



11 IMPLEMENTATION

11.1 Introduction

The long-term success of the Comprehensive Plan depends on putting the community's vision and goals into action. From increasing economic development opportunities to providing more affordable housing options, the Plan provides an opportunity to proactively identify, prioritize, and implement Plan goals and policies. When implementation occurs, Kittitas County can move from where it is to where it wants to be over the next 20 years. Goals and policies within the Plan must be realistic and achievable. Setting clear priorities and understanding available resources is also essential for effective implementation of the Plan on an annual basis.



The Plan provides the foundation for future actions. However, not all goals and policies are implemented through development regulations, such as zoning or environmental regulations. The implementation of many Comprehensive Plan goals and policies is carried out through other plans and programs, such as coordination with other agencies to accomplish regional goals or seeking funding to meet certain objectives.

An Implementation Plan identifies goals and policies which need further action. It then defines who is responsible for implementing those policies along with identifying the roles and responsibilities of



various departments, agencies, and stakeholders, such as community development services or public works, for example:



By assigning accountability, implementation is managed and tracked effectively. Regular reporting mechanisms should be established, requiring responsible parties to provide updates on progress, challenges, and outcomes. This could occur during annual work plan preparation or as part of the budget process. This structure helps maintain accountability, encourages collaboration across departments, and ensures that annual progress is made with goal and policy implementation.

11.1.1 Implementing Goals and Policies

Although zoning and development regulations are a critical tool for managing growth in the county, not all policies are implemented through development regulations. Policies can be implemented in many ways. Some examples of policy implementation are:

Implementation Type	Description and Examples
Project	This is a physical change in the community to achieve countywide goals. These are often transportation projects identified in the Transportation Element and Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan. This could also include investments and projects such as creating economic opportunities through public/private partnerships.
Program	This may include services, incentives, or education programs provided by the County to achieve identified County goals. An example could be the creation and implementation of a Permit Ready Accessory Dwelling Unit program in coordination with the cities.
Plans or Studies	The Comprehensive Plan identifies further areas of study or detailed planning necessary before projects can be prioritized. An example could be completing an economic study to better understand challenges and opportunities for recruiting new business in the county before working on efforts to recruit those businesses or create incentives to attract those businesses.
Support or Coordination	This could include partnering with agencies more suitable for accomplishing identified goals or policies. An example could include the County working through other agencies to secure joint funding for additional plans and studies beneficial for the county and cities.



11.1.2 Annual Implementation

It is the intent of the County to produce meaningful results which can only be done by taking annual steps to keep moving forward. The County will strive to complete the following tasks annually to understand if progress is made toward the community priorities.

1. Review the Implementation Table and Key Milestones to achieve.
2. Report on the status of each action in the implementation table.
3. Identify the barrier, if the milestone has not been achieved, or identify the next key milestone.

Providing this information prior to the annual budget review process will help the Board of County Commissioners be more informed and may provide insight into budget considerations for the following year.

11.2 Implementation Priorities and Tables

After meeting with the Board of County Commissioners, Planning Commission Members, and reviewing public participation results, the Board identified key priority goals and policies to guide County efforts over the next ten years, in response to community input and anticipated growth. Implementation of these priorities will depend on available funding and staff capacity, with annual review by the Board to direct resources, but the County is committed to making progress on the following important topics:

Land Use: Urban growth area development; Impacts of state and federal land purchases

Housing: Affordable Housing; Permit-Ready Accessory Dwelling Units; Upper County Housing

Transportation: Multi-Modal Standards and Levels of Service

Economic Development: Opportunities to grow jobs; Recreation-based economy

Utilities: Energy Production Facilities

These have been pulled out of their original Elements and placed here for annual review by Community Development Services and the Board of County Commissioners. Although it will not be feasible to act on all of these policies on an annual basis, the County will remain flexible and opportunistic to working toward these goals.



Implementation Table Definitions

Element	Element in the Comprehensive Plan
Goal or Policy	Exact language of the goal or policy
Department responsible	Identify County department
Cost	<p>\$ = Minimal staff time or cost. current year.</p> <p>\$\$ = Moderate staff time or cost. Policy implementation within current year.</p> <p>\$\$\$ = Moderate staff time or cost. Multi-year policy implementation.</p> <p>\$\$\$\$ = Substantial staff time or cost. Multi-year policy implementation.</p>
Timeframe	<p>Short = 1-3 years</p> <p>Medium = 5-7 years</p> <p>Long = 10+ years</p>

The following priority tables are separate by Goals.



11.2.1 Urban Growth Area Development

Element	Goal / Policy	Department	Cost	Timeframe
Land Use	LU-G2 Identify areas adjacent to existing cities and unincorporated urban growth areas which may be most conducive to facilitating future urban growth. Implement incentives to keep these areas from developing with rural growth patterns which may not facilitate a transition to being included within an urban growth area.	Community Development Services	\$\$\$	Long
	LU-P13 Limit identified areas to those with fewer critical areas and where infrastructure, such as public water, sewer, and new roads may be more easily provided.			
	LU-P14 Incentivize the use of planning measures such as shadow platting, cluster development, or Transfer of Development Rights to encourage growth which may better facilitate future inclusion into the urban growth area.			
	LU-P15 Ensure landowners understand that the identification as an area where urban growth may be facilitated in the future does not signify that the property will be included into the urban growth area in the future.			



11.2.2 Federal and State Land Purchases

Element	Goal / Policy	Department	Cost	Timeframe
Land Use	LU-G4 Mitigate impacts of state and federal agencies purchasing land which removes opportunities for housing, jobs, and economic development within the county and impacts county finance.	Community Development Services	\$\$\$	Medium
	LU-P20 When future land purchases are being considered by state agencies, provide notification to ensure they are aware that state agencies are required to comply with the comprehensive plan and development regulations per RCW 36.70A.103. Notification should outline comprehensive plan goals, policies, and development regulations where property sales may impact compliance with adopted plans and policies.			
	LU-P21 Consider developing a program to transfer density from properties owned by state and federal agencies to cities and unincorporated urban growth areas.			
	LU-P22 Work through the Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC) to identify measures which may be taken to mitigate land purchase impacts.			

11.2.3 Affordable Housing

Element	Goal / Policy	Department	Cost	Timeframe
Housing	H-G1 Support strategies that increase and maintain the availability of affordable housing for all income levels throughout the county.	Community Development Services	\$\$\$	Medium
	H-P1 Within urban growth areas, establish development regulations and incentives that provide an equitable supply of housing types, sizes, costs, and densities which are affordable to all economic groups throughout the county.			
	H-P2, H-P3, H-P4, H-P5 , Coordinate with Cities to promote affordable housing in urban growth areas.			
	H-P6 Monitor development patterns around the Ellensburg UGA to reduce the potential for urban sprawl in rural areas.			
	H-P7 Explore incentives that may reduce costs, reduce timelines, or expand housing types, these may include density incentives, fee reductions, setback reductions, or increased building heights.			

11.2.4 Permit Ready Accessory Dwelling Units

Element	Goal / Policy	Department	Cost	Timeframe
Housing	H-G3 Develop a permit ready Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) program in coordination with the cities to provide more affordable housing options throughout the county.	Community Development Services	\$\$	Medium
	H-P21 Work with the cities through the Kittitas County Council of Governments to establish a joint permit ready Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) program. Creating a program together will reduce upfront costs of developing a program, long term implementation costs, and it will provide users of the program consistency across jurisdictions.			
	H-P22 Create a permit ready accessory dwelling unit to reduce pre-construction costs, reduce permit timelines, and contribute to creating more housing options.			

11.2.5 Opportunities to Grow Jobs

Element	Goal / Policy	Department	Cost	Timeframe
Economic Development	E-G3 Promote economic development and job growth through coordination with Kittitas County Economic Development, the cities, and CWU.	Community Development Services	\$\$\$	Medium
	E-P15 Complete a study to identify the opportunities and challenges of economic development and job growth within the county.			
	E-P16 Based upon the findings from recent or newly completed studies, update development regulations to remove barriers and incentivize uses, as necessary.			
	E-P17 Through Kittitas County Economic Development and cities, consider options to jointly fund campaigns to recruit businesses to the county.			
	E-P18 Build relationships and recruit employers from target job sectors like tourism, recreation, aviation manufacturing and training, timber industries, agriculture, and beverage sectors.			
	E-P19 Engage and work with the Kittitas County Economic Development, CWU, and the City of Ellensburg on a strategic plan to attract businesses which align with and support graduates of CWU to grow economic opportunities, support CWU, and provide increased job opportunities for graduates within the county.			

11.2.6 Recreation Based Economy

Element	Goal / Policy	Department	Cost	Timeframe
Economic Development	E-G2 Explore options to grow outdoor recreational opportunities within the county, such as partnerships, code updates, and coordination.	Community Development Services	\$\$\$	Medium
	E-P11 Use studies that assess opportunities and challenges for recreational opportunities to find potential solutions.			
	E-P12 Engage stakeholders to isolate or define recreational areas and build greater identity and branding around their unique features.			
	E-P13 Engage stakeholders in discussions about the potential benefits and impacts of recreation industry growth to plan for mitigation efforts ahead of implementing actions.			
	E-P14 Consider how new large scale recreational opportunities will provide options for multi-modal transportation options to decrease impacts on county roads, where feasible.			

11.2.7 Energy Production Facilities

Element	Goal / Policy	Department	Cost	Timeframe
Utilities	U-G7 Plan for, coordinate, and allow the expansion of solar production and wind to improve the resilience of Kittitas County. Ensure codes encourage upfront mitigation for project impacts and are properly sited.	Community Development Services	\$\$\$\$	Medium
	U-P28 Complete a study to identify where uses such as solar, winter, and battery storage are most likely to be proposed in the future. Update codes to reflect findings.			
	U-P29 Balance where uses are permitted or conditionally permitted with stakeholder and community feedback.			
	U-P30 Where permitted, update codes to upfront identify studies and project mitigation to provide a more streamlined permitted process.			