

Southwest Urban Growth Area Boundary Planning Study

Frequently Asked Questions

The draft Southwest Urban Growth Area Boundary Planning Study (BPS) report has just been posted. Is there a comment period before it is finalized?

The study report is identified as draft since the last part of the study, before it is finalized, is to include a summary from the August 7, 2019 [Study Sharing Workshop](#) and comments from a brief [survey](#) that is online until August 25th, 2019. We are making study results available to share work undertaken. However, as a study, and not a plan with formal action, there is no public comment period.

What happens next with the information from the Study?

The study is designed to collect data and information on the study area, which can be used as a resource during future planning initiatives or if there are future proposals seeking amendments to the urban growth area (UGA) boundaries in the study area vicinity. (The annual [“docketing” process](#).) The next major initiative where the County will be considering if land use adjustments are required to accommodate future growth will be Snohomish County’s [comprehensive plan update in 2023](#). As a study, not a detailed plan or proposal for land use or growth distribution, the existence of the Boundary Planning Study does not presume an outcome on any proposal or comprehensive plan update process the County will consider in the future. Since the Boundary Planning Study is a high-level study producing rough or approximate analysis, any future detailed analysis conducted to meet other state planning requirements may produce different numbers or information or test more fully developed approaches for growth.

How will I know if the County is going to make changes to the urban growth area (UGA) boundary or change land uses in this area?

If, in the course of the County’s 2023 comprehensive plan update or in consideration of an annual docketing proposal, changes are proposed to urban growth area boundaries or land uses in the Boundary Planning Study area, the County will, at that time, fully analyze any such proposal consistent with its Growth Management Act (GMA) and State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) obligations and in full consideration of population projections, allocated growth targets, analysis of buildable lands capacity, and any other relevant considerations. The process for taking legislative action to amend land uses includes public participation, with hearings before the Snohomish County Planning Commission and the Snohomish County Council.

Will there be similar studies in other parts of the county?

There are no other plans in place at this time to complete similar studies for other parts of the County. The Boundary Planning Study area was chosen for study because it is adjacent to a fast-growing area where the County has seen and expects to see continued interest in expanding the urban growth area (UGA). Given the interest and pressures on this part of the county, the County wanted to develop data and information under existing conditions and conceptual hypothetical growth scenarios. It should be noted that the Boundary Planning Study does not present tradeoffs about growth in other parts of the county. If the growth were not proposed in the Boundary Planning Study, and instead was going to other parts of the county, environmental and social implications and capital costs would be incurred in other parts of the county.

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One geographically-focused initiative that Snohomish County is working on, in partnership with stakeholders, is planning for the arrival of light rail in the mid-2030s. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to leverage major transit investments to benefit the surrounding communities and make light rail safely, conveniently and efficiently accessible. In planning for light rail, the county will be developing a 'subarea plan' (with recommendations on legislative actions) for an area roughly between the cities of Everett, Mukilteo, Lynnwood and Mill Creek, that has the potential to accommodate additional population and employment growth given the level of transit investment. Two proposed light rail stations located along Interstate 5 at 164th St and 128th St. are areas that will be reviewed in the "subarea plan" for their potential to accommodate additional growth in the county. More information on this project may be found at the [Light Rail Communities project web page](http://www.snohomishcountywa.gov/LRC) at www.snohomishcountywa.gov/LRC.