

City of Shoreline
Shoreline Master Program
Task 2.2: Land Use and Public Access Analysis
December 31, 2008
Revised April 9, 2010

1.0 Introduction

Under WAC 173-26-201(3)(d)(ii), local jurisdictions are required to conduct an analysis to estimate the future demand for shoreline space and potential use conflicts, and characterize current shoreline use patterns and projected trends to ensure appropriate uses.

To meet the requirements of the WAC, this memo expands on the shoreline use and public access discussion in the City's Shoreline Inventory and Characterization report (September 2008). An overview of current and projected use patterns is provided by shoreline segment. A discussion of future public access demand and opportunities and constraints is also included. Potential use conflicts are identified based on current use patterns and projected shoreline use trends.

2.0 Current Shoreline Use Patterns and Redevelopment Potential

2.1 Current Shoreline Use Patterns

This section provides information on shoreline conditions and uses within each shoreline district, referencing the City's Shoreline Inventory and Characterization and the existing Shoreline Master Program (1998). See Table 2 on page 24 of the Inventory and Characterization report for a summary of existing, allowed and planned land uses along the shoreline.

Shoreline Segment A

This shoreline district is 3,491 feet in length and represents 20 percent of the City's shoreline planning area. Segment A is located in the City of Shoreline's Potential Annexation Area (PAA). Point Wells, a petroleum facility, and King County owned right-of-way (ROW) are located in the shoreline planning area. Approximately 23 percent (by length) is unmodified beach. The remaining portion is highly modified with riprap and sheet pile, as well as a large barge dock. No marine riparian vegetation is present, but around 800 feet of the shoreline contains a beach with sand, logs and pebbles.

According to the Snohomish County Planning and Development Services website, the current Snohomish County Shoreline Master Program (SMP) designates Segment A as Urban (landward of the Ordinary High Water Mark [OHWM]) and Marine (waterward of the OHWM). The 1998 City of Shoreline SMP includes policies that state that if Point Wells were annexed and redeveloped, a mix of commercial, residential, recreational and industrial water-oriented uses should be considered. Shoreline's Comprehensive Plan land use map designates Shoreline Segment A for mixed uses in the future.

Shoreline Segment B

This shoreline district is 4,554 feet in length, comprises 21.7 acres, and is bounded by the Snohomish County line to the north, the Richmond Beach residential area to the east and Richmond Beach Saltwater Park to the south. The Comprehensive Plan designations are Low Density Residential and Public Facilities. The existing land uses in the segment are single- and multi-family residential, railroad and road ROWs, and utilities. The City's SMP classifies Segment B as Urban.

No marine riparian vegetation is present and the shoreline is predominately seawall (riprap), although the beach faces are sandy. It is unlikely that any major redevelopment will occur within this segment.

Shoreline Segment C

This shoreline district is 2,677 feet in length, and comprises 11 acres of the shoreline planning area. The Comprehensive Plan designations for the segment are Public Facilities and Open Space. Existing uses include the Richmond Beach Saltwater Park, which is owned and maintained by the City of Shoreline, the BNSF Railroad ROW, a small percentage of single-family residential, and Blue Heron Reserve, a privately owned open space tract. The City's SMP designates Segment C as Urban. There is currently limited work being done to the park, including increasing parking availability and recreational opportunities, and installing public artwork (see Section 3.2 for more details). Beyond the scope of park improvements, no other development is likely, and would necessitate an amendment to the Park's Master Plan.

The only marine riparian vegetation that occurs waterward of the BNSF railroad within City limits is located in this Segment, at Richmond Beach Saltwater Park. The shoreline is almost three-quarters beach berm and one-quarter seawall (riprap). The sandy beaches are one of the few areas that provide for public access and are frequently used. Native marine plant riparian vegetation could be restored at the Richmond Beach Saltwater site.

Shoreline Segment D

This shoreline district is 1,289 feet in length, and comprises 5.7 acres bounded by the Richmond Beach Saltwater Park to the north and the Innis Arden Reserve Park to the south. The Comprehensive Plan designations for the segment include Public Facilities and Low Density Residential. Existing land uses in Segment D are Coyote Reserve, a privately owned open space tract, single-family residential homes in the Innis Arden residential neighborhood, and the BNSF Railroad ROW. The City's SMP environmental designation is Rural.

No marine riparian vegetation is present and the area is categorized as having a sand beach leading to a seawall (riprap).

Shoreline Segment E

This shoreline district is the largest (9,348 feet in length and comprising 41.6 acres) accounting for over 40% of the entire shoreline within the city's boundaries. It includes the Innis Arden Reserve, owned and maintained by the City of Shoreline, Boeing Creek Reserve, privately owned open space, and the Highlands neighborhood which runs to the southern city limit, bordering the City of Seattle. The Comprehensive Plan designations for the segment include Public Facilities, Low Density Residential, Public Open Space and Private Open Space, and

BNSF Railroad ROW, which occupies 60% of the shoreline area. The City's SMP designations include Rural and Conservancy.

No marine riparian vegetation is present and the entire shoreline is capped with a seawall (riprap), but includes a beach with low tide terrace. It would be possible to establish native marine riparian vegetation along the marine shoreline of the Boeing Creek drainage as part of a restoration project.

2.2 Redevelopment Potential

Generally speaking, substantial redevelopment along the length of the shoreline planning segments is unlikely. Vacant parcels occupy only 2 percent of the City's shoreline planning area (including the PAA). The vacant properties are located in Segments B and E. Houses on existing single-family lots will probably continue to grow larger through additions and redevelopments that replace the previous structure with either the maximum number of units or the maximum building envelope allowed under the zoning regulations. However, it is unlikely that additional land will be made available for development.

The only property that is likely to redevelop is Point Wells, and at this point, it is unknown if it will be part of the proposed Snohomish County annexation plan, or another plan which has not been made available for public and municipal comment. In addition to the City of Shoreline, the Town of Woodway has included Point Wells as part of their annexation area even though the most logical access points to the property fall within the City of Shoreline's boundaries. The level of remediation that would be required to develop the former petroleum facility could be cost prohibitive for potential uses.

Another factor which will continue to inhibit development along the Puget Sound shoreline is the BNSF Railway which occupies 48 percent of the city's shoreline planning area, extending in a north-south direction along the entire length of the shoreline. This limits development potential due to two major considerations. First, the City has received no indication that BNSF would sell their ROW property, and secondly, vehicular access across the BNSF tracks is limited. A third factor that contributes to limiting development is landslide hazard areas located in portions of Segments B through E.

Point Wells

In order to provide a bit more specificity to the redevelopment potential for Point Wells, this subsection will discuss some of the aspects of the current proposal being reviewed by Snohomish County. The property owner of Point Wells, Paramount of Washington, has petitioned Snohomish County to change the Snohomish County comprehensive plan designation of Urban Industrial to Urban Center, which allows a mix of uses. This indicates the property owner's potential interest for redevelopment. The proposal could include up to 1,000 housing units and office and commercial/retail space, according to the Snohomish County Comprehensive Plan Amendment Application filed by the property owner. However, the extent of development is limited due to transportation access constraints.

The site is listed on the Department of Ecology's Suspected and Confirmed Contaminated Sites List for soil, groundwater and surface water contamination associated with previous petroleum production. Remediation plans for the property are unknown at this time.

Point Wells is in both the Town of Woodway Municipal Urban Growth Area and in the City of Shoreline Potential Annexation Area. The property owner may wish to annex to either Woodway or Shoreline, or to remain in unincorporated Snohomish County. Depending on the governing jurisdiction at the time of permit submittal, the project would be subject to the Shoreline Master Program of that jurisdiction.

Residential

As previously mentioned, limited redevelopment is expected in Segments B and D to replace existing houses with larger ones.

2.3 Future Demand for Water-Oriented Uses

Point Wells could potentially redevelop with another type of water-oriented use, although the City has received no such indications at this point in time. Availability for water-oriented options within existing city limits is restricted and therefore unlikely due to constraints discussed under Section 3.0 (i.e. limited vehicular access and limited amount of vacant properties).

3.0 Public Access Demand and Opportunities

Increasing opportunities for public access has been mentioned as a priority in a number of the City's guiding documents, including the Environmental Sustainability Strategy. The City of Shoreline Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan (2005) Chapter 4 Needs Assessment states that Shoreline is deficient in providing community and neighborhood parks, and sites with water access (specifically the Puget Sound and Echo Lake), natural areas, and trails for walking and biking.

There are several limitations to creating such additional opportunities. Purchasing property from BNSF Railroad and single-family homeowners is unlikely because they have historically been uninterested in selling to the City. It is also unlikely that there will be an opportunity to purchase the Boeing Creek Reserve. Another constraint to increasing access is that there are no existing street-ends that provide opportunity for viewing the Puget Sound shoreline.

Despite these limitations, the City's Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department (PRCS) continues to look for opportunities to increase public access, including purchase of land and discussions with the BNSF Railroad to consider creating more pedestrian overpasses. PRCS also continues to maintain and search for ways to improve the 8 percent of shoreline planning area currently occupied by parks and open space.

3.1 Existing public access and demand

Richmond Beach Saltwater Park is located in Shoreline Segment C. It is a regional 40-acre park that provides active and passive uses including picnic areas, shelter buildings, a playground area, observation areas, trails, and Puget Sound shoreline access. Park users occasionally take advantage of the shoreline access for swimming in Puget Sound during favorable weather conditions.

Blue Heron Reserve is a private open space tract located in the southern portion of Segment C. It is associated with Innis Arden North. No public shoreline access is permitted along the tract.

Coyote Reserve is also a private open space tract. It is located in the northern portion of Segment D. It is associated with Innis Arden South. No public shoreline access is permitted along the tract.

Innis Arden Reserve is a 23-acre natural open space area/greenway passive-use park located in the northern area of Segment E along the bluffs overlooking Puget Sound. Hiking/walking trails represent the main activity of this passive-use reserve. Although trails eventually lead to the shoreline, the public has to cross the BNSF railroad tracks and riprap to reach the Puget Sound shoreline.

Boeing Creek Reserve is a private 4-acre natural area associated with Boeing Creek located along the Puget Sound shoreline in the central portion of Segment E. It is preserved as private open space. No public shoreline access is permitted from this reserve along the bluff.

3.2 Opportunities for Public Access

The City of Shoreline's Comprehensive Plan provides a list of funded and unfunded parks, recreation, open space and city facility capital improvements. Opportunities for enhancing public access to the shoreline currently under consideration include development of a trail system along Puget Sound between Richmond Beach Saltwater Park and Innis Arden Reserve, amenity enhancements and development of overlooks, viewpoints and interpretive signage, habitat and native plant restoration at Innis Arden Reserve, and providing beach access at the Boeing Creek Reserve.

Shoreline Segment A

Redevelopment scenarios for Point Wells could include public access.

Shoreline Segment B

As part of King County mitigation for impacts from the Brightwater Treatment Plant project, a new park will be installed at the King County Richmond Beach Pump Station. Improvements to the site will include construction of a small parking area, restroom, interpretive watchtower overlooking the BNSF railroad and Puget Sound, and play areas. No shoreline access west of the BNSF railroad is proposed at this time, although it is included in the City's Comprehensive Plan as a future improvement.

Shoreline Segment C

The City is currently in the process of implementing the City's Master Plan improvements for Richmond Beach Saltwater Park. The Master Plan includes improving the park entrance and road; pedestrian sidewalks, stairs and trails; bridge access and safety; a new beach wash-down area; a new overlook parking area across from the caretaker's residence; a new mid-level terrace area with parking, picnic area and gathering space; and new entry, way-finding and interpretive educational signage. Phase I improvements include controlling public access away from steep slope areas and improving access across steep slopes by constructing raised stairs and boardwalks in selected locations. Future phases of the master plan propose beach and dune restoration. Restoration of native marine plants could be incorporated in future improvement projects.

The Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan include improvements that would be implemented at a later date. These include developing an underwater marine park, a pier, and a trail along Puget Sound to connect the park to Innis Arden Reserve.

A proposal currently under consideration by the PRCS Department, Parks Board and City Council is the creation of a timed, off-leash dog park area. The proposal would not require any construction beyond way finding signs and means of disposal for dog waste.

Shoreline Segment D

Opportunities to provide public access in this segment are limited because properties along the shoreline are privately owned. There are also dangers along the shoreline including unstable slopes and landslide hazards.

Shoreline Segment E

Improvements are planned to Innis Arden Reserve including improving the trail system, developing overlook viewpoints and interpretive signage, stabilizing slopes, enhancing vegetation and developing safe access to Puget Sound across the BNSF Railway ROW.

4.0 Potential Use Conflicts

If Point Wells redevelops with high intensity land uses then there might be conflicts with surrounding residential uses. The neighborhoods along the shoreline would probably not support development which would increase traffic on residential streets, whether at Point Wells or other sites along the shoreline, unless there is a perceived substantial benefit.

Another potential conflict exists between public access and restoration opportunities. Publicly owned land is the most viable option for restoration in the city. However, restoring land may reduce the amount of property available for public access because restored land needs to be protected from human/pet activities to prevent harm to the nearshore environment.