

## Trend in Achieved Density of Residential Development

### OUTCOME: MAKE EFFICIENT USE OF URBAN LAND

#### Countywide Planning Policy Rationale

“All jurisdictions shall make the decisions required to implement the Countywide Planning Policies and their respective comprehensive plans through development regulations.” (CPP FW-1, Step 3) “In order to ensure efficient use of the land within the Urban Growth Area...each jurisdiction shall... establish a minimum density (not including critical areas) for new construction in each residential zone.” (CPP LU-66)

Monitoring changes in residential densities provides an opportunity to measure how efficiently our urban land is being utilized. Comparing achieved to planned densities is very useful at the jurisdictional level. However, planned densities vary greatly from zone to zone, and from city to city. At the sub-regional and County level it is more useful to compare average densities achieved currently to those achieved in the recent past.

#### Single-family residential densities

Densities of single-family residential development are measured in two ways: in recorded plats of single-family subdivisions and in building permits issued for single-family houses. Figure 34.1 shows the amount of land, lots created and achieved densities in single-family subdivision plats between 1996-2000 and 2001-2005.

Figure 34.1

Single-Family Plats in King County Urban Growth Area						
	1996-2000			2001-2005		
	Net Acres	Lots	Lots/Acre	Net Acres	Lots	Lots/Acre
Sea-Shore	139	834	6.0	36	227	6.3
East County	1,391	5,461	3.9	1,547	9,331	6.0
South County	1,037	5,651	5.4	1,738	11,108	6.4
Rural Cities	419	1,849	4.4	278	1,594	5.7
<b>Total UGA</b>	<b>2,986</b>	<b>13,795</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>3,599</b>	<b>22,260</b>	<b>6.2</b>

source: 2007 King County Buildable Lands Report

Plats, a leading indicator of future densities, achieved 6.2 Dwelling Units (DUs) per net acre on over 22,000 recorded lots, a 60% increase in the number of lots compared with the previous 5-year period. Net plat densities were roughly consistent across the 4 subareas, around 6 DUs per net acre. Densities have increased within each subarea, particularly in East County which increased from just under 4 DUs per net acre to 6 DUs per net acre.

Figure 34.2

Single-Family Permits in King County Urban Growth Area						
	1996-2000			2001-2005		
	Net Acres	Units	Units/Acre	Net Acres	Units	Units/Acre
Sea-Shore	371	2,434	6.6	367	2,605	7.1
East County	2,221	7,592	3.4	1,927	9,684	5.0
South County	1,963	8,321	4.2	2,191	12,001	5.5
Rural Cities	621	1,119	1.8	364	1,651	4.5
<b>Total UGA</b>	<b>5,176</b>	<b>19,466</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>4,849</b>	<b>25,941</b>	<b>5.3</b>

source: 2007 King County Buildable Lands Report

Density trends in single-family permits match those observed in the plat data. UGA-wide, permit densities increased from 3.8 units per net acre in the 1996-2000 period to 5.3 units per net acre in the most recent period, and densities increased within each subarea throughout the county. From 2001 to 2005, nearly 26,000 units of new single-family development were permitted or finalized in the Urban Growth Area (UGA), an increase of 33% in permit activity.

Figure 34.3

Multifamily Permits in King County Urban Growth Area						
	1996-2000			2001-2005		
	Net Acres	Units	Units/Acre	Net Acres	Units	Units/Acre
Sea-Shore	156	8,115	52.0	184	13,485	73.3
East County	473	9,677	20.5	201	6,656	33.1
South County	455	7,938	17.4	260	4,971	19.1
Rural Cities	142	1,255	8.8	25	316	12.6
<b>Total UGA</b>	<b>1,226</b>	<b>26,985</b>	<b>22.0</b>	<b>670</b>	<b>25,428</b>	<b>38.0</b>

source: 2007 King County Buildable Lands Report

#### Multifamily residential densities

UGA-wide, over 25,000 multifamily units were permitted with an overall density of 38.0 DUs per net acre in the recent 5-year review period. This represents a large increase from the density achieved during the 1996-2000 period of 22 DUs per net acre despite about the same number of permits issued or finalized. Densities have increased within each subarea throughout the county. Sea-Shore saw the greatest amount of multifamily development at the highest density. Meanwhile, densities also increased in suburban areas, despite a decrease in the number of permits issued outside of the Sea-Shore subarea.