



Defining Legacy:

A joint panel exploring rural character through a stewardship lens

Washington State Department of Commerce
GROWTH MANAGEMENT SERVICES
LOCAL GOVERNMENT DIVISION

10/9/2025

Yakima County
LONG RANGE PLANNING SECTION
PLANNING DIVISION



Washington State
Department of
Commerce

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ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

Session:

1 Introductions

Characterizing Stewardship

2 County Planning

Defining Rural Character

3 Rural Development and LAMIRDs

Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Development

4 Rural Resources

Designated Resource Lands

5 Applying a “Stewardship” Lens for Rural Lands

Discussion and Q&A

Speakers:

Deanah Watson, Sr. Planner

COMMERCE, GROWTH MANAGEMENT SERVICES

PANELIST: MODERATOR / STEWARDSHIP AND RURAL LANDS

Aaron M. Cohen, Planner IV

YAKIMA COUNTY, LONG RANGE SECTION

PANELIST: LOCAL PLANNING / RURAL CHARACTER

Benjamin Serr, Eastern Regional Manager

COMMERCE, GROWTH MANAGEMENT SERVICES

PANELIST: LAMIRDs

Lexine Long, Sr. Planner

COMMERCE, GROWTH MANAGEMENT SERVICES

PANELIST: DESIGNATED RESOURCE LANDS

Defining Legacy:

Rural character through a stewardship lens

A common mission:

- Guide development
- Provide for resident needs
- Protect what we value
- Envision ever-changing circumstances

Envisioning stewardship:

- Maintain an even longer view
- Stewards do not own; they tend
- Assume intrinsic value
- Prioritize flexibility to protect vulnerable interests

Shaping a legacy, daily:

Planner as navigator...

- Legal requirements
- Stakeholders and officials
- Budget constraints
- General uncertainties

Planner as guide...

- Applying a stewardship lens

Can a “**stewardship lens**” be practical?



Stewardship:

A deeper ethic measure for action

Stewardship:

- Extends minimum timeframes to further test alternatives
- Suspends sense of entitlement
- Assumes intrinsic value
- Leaves adaptive options open
- Pursues maximum flexibility to protect vulnerable interests

Planner as steward...

“Stewardship Lens” | Thought Experiment:

How far into the future can this practice continue, beyond standard time horizons and into perpetuity?

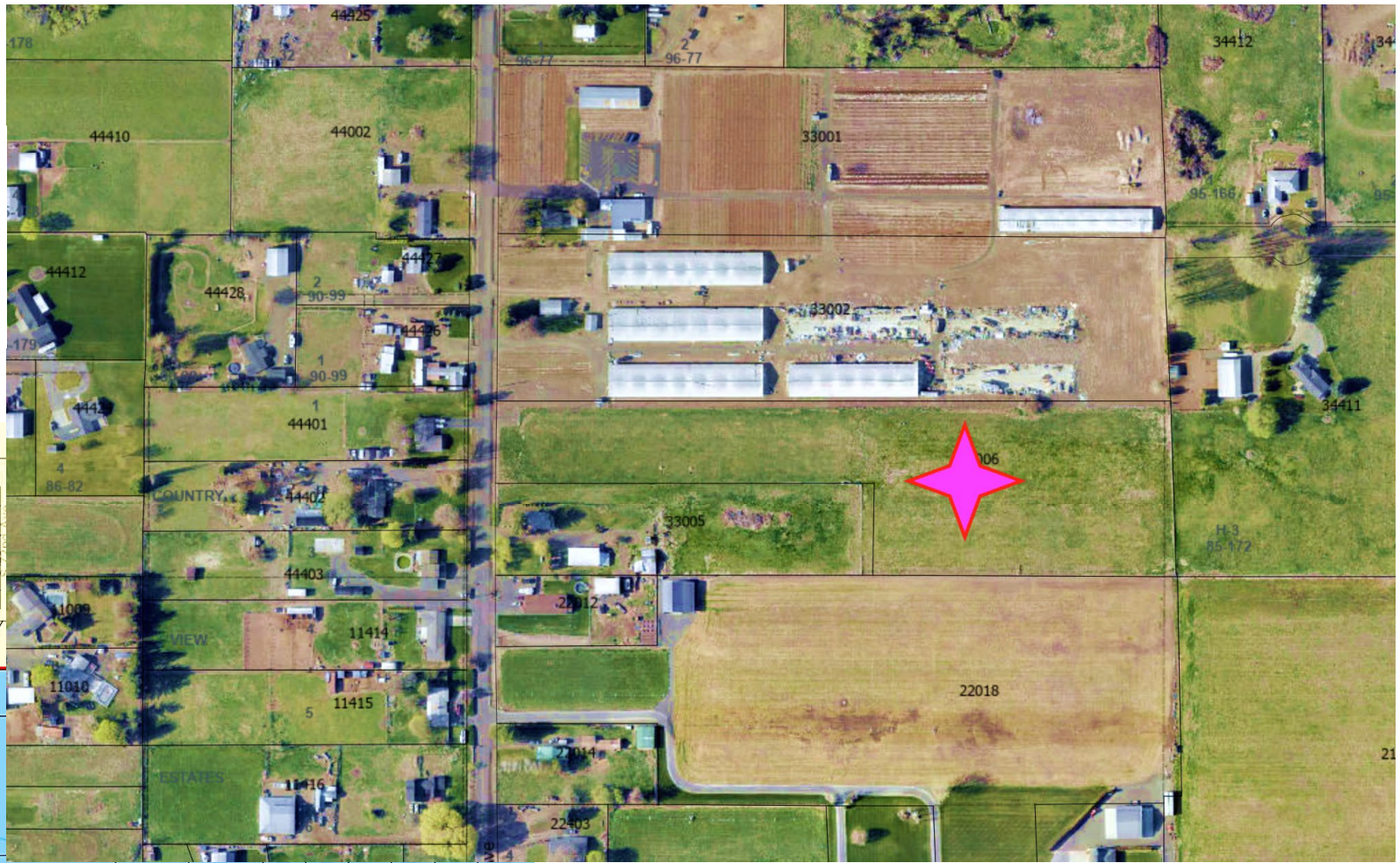
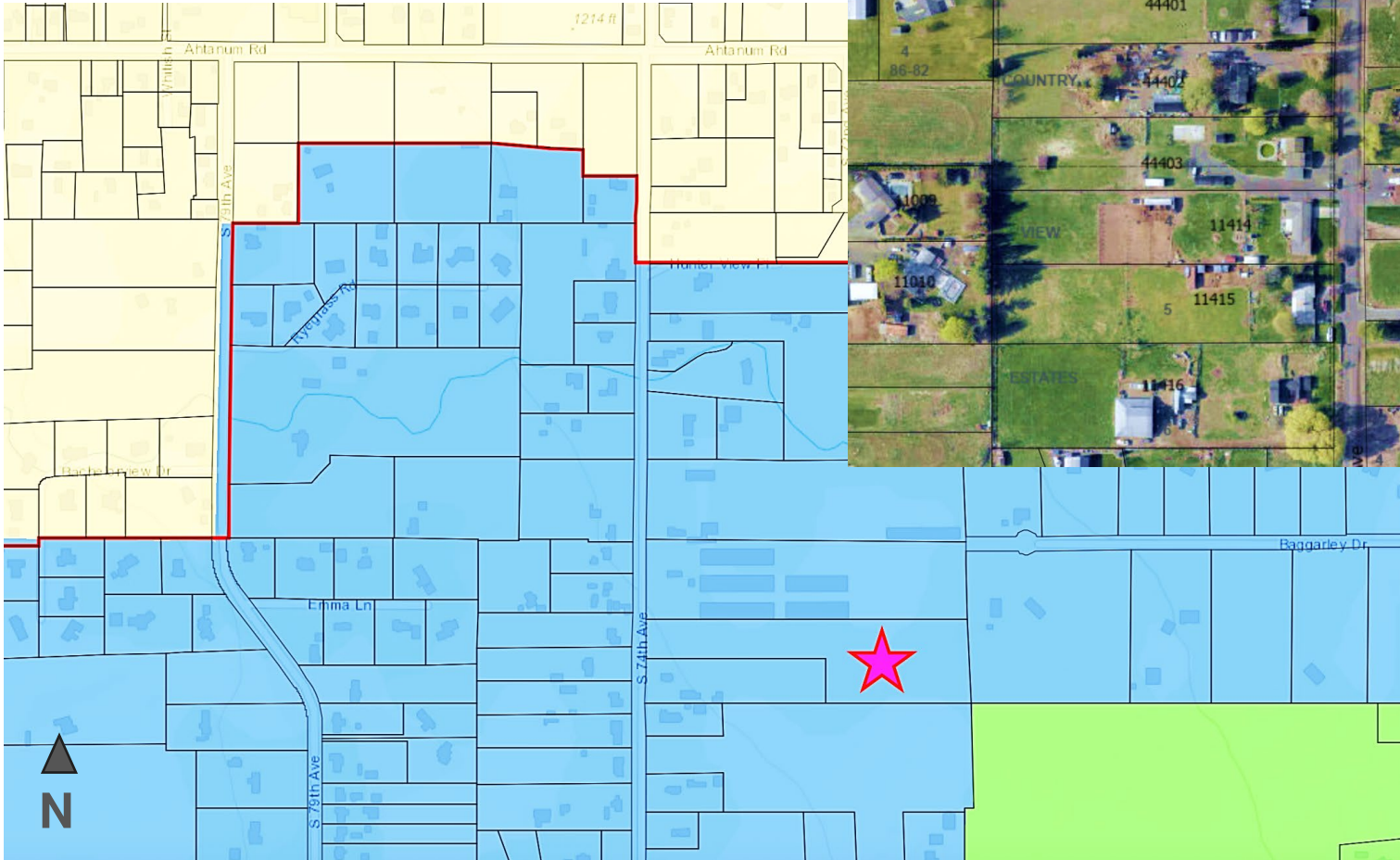
If not into perpetuity, then is it sustainable stewardship? Can we adapt; find a new alternative?

How will your thought experiment inform your planning decisions?



Image credit: Washington State
Department of Commerce,
Growth Management Services,
2025

Rural Character Case Studies



Yakima County Rural Character Case Studies

Defining rural character:

Though residents may agree to preserve rural character...

- *They define “rural character” differently, based on the traits they identify as essential to rural image.*



Yakima County Rural Character Case Studies



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LAMIRD:

Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Development

Revised Code of Washington	Citation
Definitions–Purpose	RCW 36.70A.030 (Rural definitions)
Rural Element–LAMIRDs	RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)(i–v), (e)
LAMIRD Types	Embedded in RCW above: (i) General, (ii) Recreation/tourism, etc.
Logical Outer Boundaries	RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)(iv)
Service/Scale Criteria	RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)(i–ii)
Exclusions (Major Industrial/Resort)	RCW 36.70A.070(5)(e); RCW 36.70A.360–.365



Natural Resource Lands (NRL) Designations

Three types of **designated** resource lands:

Agricultural Lands

Not already characterized by urban growth and have long-term significance for the commercial production of food or other agricultural products.

Forestlands

Not already characterized by urban growth and have long-term significance for the commercial production of timber.

Mineral Resource Lands

Not already characterized by urban growth and have long-term significance for the extraction of minerals.

[RCW 36.70A.170: Designations for natural resource lands](#)



Requirement to Plan for NRL

Fully planning jurisdictions

- **Adopt development regulations** to conserve designated resource lands.

Partially planning jurisdictions

- Required, at minimum, to **designate** natural resource lands.

[RCW 36.70a.060: Natural resource lands and critical areas—Development regulations.](#)

Natural Resource Lands Designations

- Minimum guidelines to designate natural resource lands:
[RCW 36.70A.050](#) and [WAC 365-190](#)
- As part of the periodic update partially planning jurisdictions should review and revise, if necessary, their natural resource lands designations
- Reviewing resource lands designations should be done using a comprehensive processes that reviews all potential resource lands, not on a parcel-by-parcel basis.

Natural Resource Lands: Development Regulations

- Fully planning county should have regulations to assure that use of lands adjacent to natural NRLs does not interfere with natural resource production. [RCW 36.70A.060\(1\)\(a\)](#) and [WAC 365-190-040](#)
- Regulations require notice on development permits and plats within 500 feet of designated NRLs that the property is within or near a designated NRL [RCW 36.70A.060\(1\)\(b\)](#)
- Regulations should encourage nonagricultural uses to be limited to lands with poor soils or otherwise not suitable for agricultural purposes. Accessory uses should be located, designed and operated to support the continuation of agricultural uses.
[RCW 36.70A.177\(3\)\(b\)](#)



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Commerce Resources: Rural Lands Guidebook

Topics

- Defining rural character
- Land use designations and densities
- Rural capacity, growth targets and projections
- Coordinating rural governmental services
- Subdivision exemptions
- Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Development
- Innovative planning techniques
- Cluster development
- Rural conservation and resources



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Commerce Resources: Periodic Update Guidance

Guidebooks

- [A Guide to the Periodic Update for Partially Planning Jurisdictions](#)
- [Critical Areas Handbook](#)
- [Quick Guide to Washington State Agencies](#)

Checklists

- [Periodic Update Checklist for Partially Planning Jurisdictions](#)
- [Critical Areas Checklist](#)
- [Commerce Periodic Update Webpage](#)
- [Commerce Critical Areas Webpage](#)

Thank you!

Deanah Watson, Sr. Planner

COMMERCE, GROWTH MANAGEMENT SERVICES

deanah.watson@commerce.wa.gov | (509) 290-4754

Aaron M. Cohen, Planner IV

YAKIMA COUNTY, LONG RANGE SECTION

Aaron.Cohen@co.yakima.wa.us | (509) 574-2300

Lexine Long, Sr. Planner

COMMERCE, GROWTH MANAGEMENT SERVICES

lexine.long@commerce.wa.gov | (360) 480-4498

Benjamin Serr, Eastern Regional Manager

COMMERCE, GROWTH MANAGEMENT SERVICES

benjamin.serr@commerce.wa.gov | (509) 724-1699



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Commerce

www.commerce.wa.gov

