

### **3. EXISTING CONDITIONS**

#### **3.1 Description of the Site and Its Context**

##### **3.1.1 Location**

The Maple Valley Place/Legacy Site is located at 25805 Maple Valley Highway and occupies the approximate geographical center of the City. Given its proximity to Lake Wilderness, it lies near the geographic center as well as the emotional “heart” of the City, since some view Lake Wilderness as the heart of Maple Valley (see “Site in Relationship to Existing Commercial Uses and Existing Residential Uses”, page 29).

##### **3.1.2 Area and Zoning Designation**

The Site encompasses approximately 54 acres of City-owned land that is zoned Multiple Use. The City’s MU zoning designation is defined in Title 18 of the *Maple Valley Municipal Code*. Generally, the requirements for MU-designated land use include minimum and maximum amounts of land used for office, retail, residential, and open spaces activities. All MU sites must follow a Multiple Use Master Permit process, as defined in MVMC 18.100.170 (see Appendix D).

##### **3.1.3 Topography**

The Site consists of a series of plateaus and ridges (see map, “General Characteristics of Site,” page 31).

##### **3.1.4 Surrounding Uses**

To the east, Maple Valley Highway forms a physical boundary and provides access to the Site. The Rock Creek Elementary School and the Tahoma School District Central Services Building are located on the eastern side of Maple Valley Highway. Further east lies the Rock Creek Open Space.

To the south, the Site abuts the S.E. 260<sup>th</sup> Street right-of-way, which is partially improved. A variety of light industrial uses and vacant land occupy the opposite side of the right-of-way. The S.E. 260<sup>th</sup> Street right-of-way forms a physical boundary for the Site and can accommodate vehicular and pedestrian access and connections to the Site and adjacent areas.

To the west, the Lake Wilderness Trail lies immediately adjacent to the Site. The Trail forms a physical boundary of the Site and provides pedestrian access to Lake Wilderness Park, Lodge, Arboretum, community buildings, and residential neighborhoods.

To the north, the Site is bordered by an established single-family neighborhood (Lake Forest Estates).

### **3.1.5 Potential Implications**

Given its proximity to Lake Wilderness, the Site provides an excellent opportunity to directly enlarge and enhance the collection of civic uses that lie within the Lake Wilderness area (e.g., Lake Wilderness Park, Lodge, and Arboretum; the Greater Maple Valley Community Center; the Maple Valley Regional Library; etc.). Accordingly, development on the Site can enhance an existing central, community-oriented precinct within the fabric of the City. Similarly, the Rock Creek Open Space is a use that may be potentially connected to the Site in some way.

Occupants of existing residential developments to the north and west are likely frequent users of the Site, as are those from the school district site to the east.

### **3.1.6 Access**

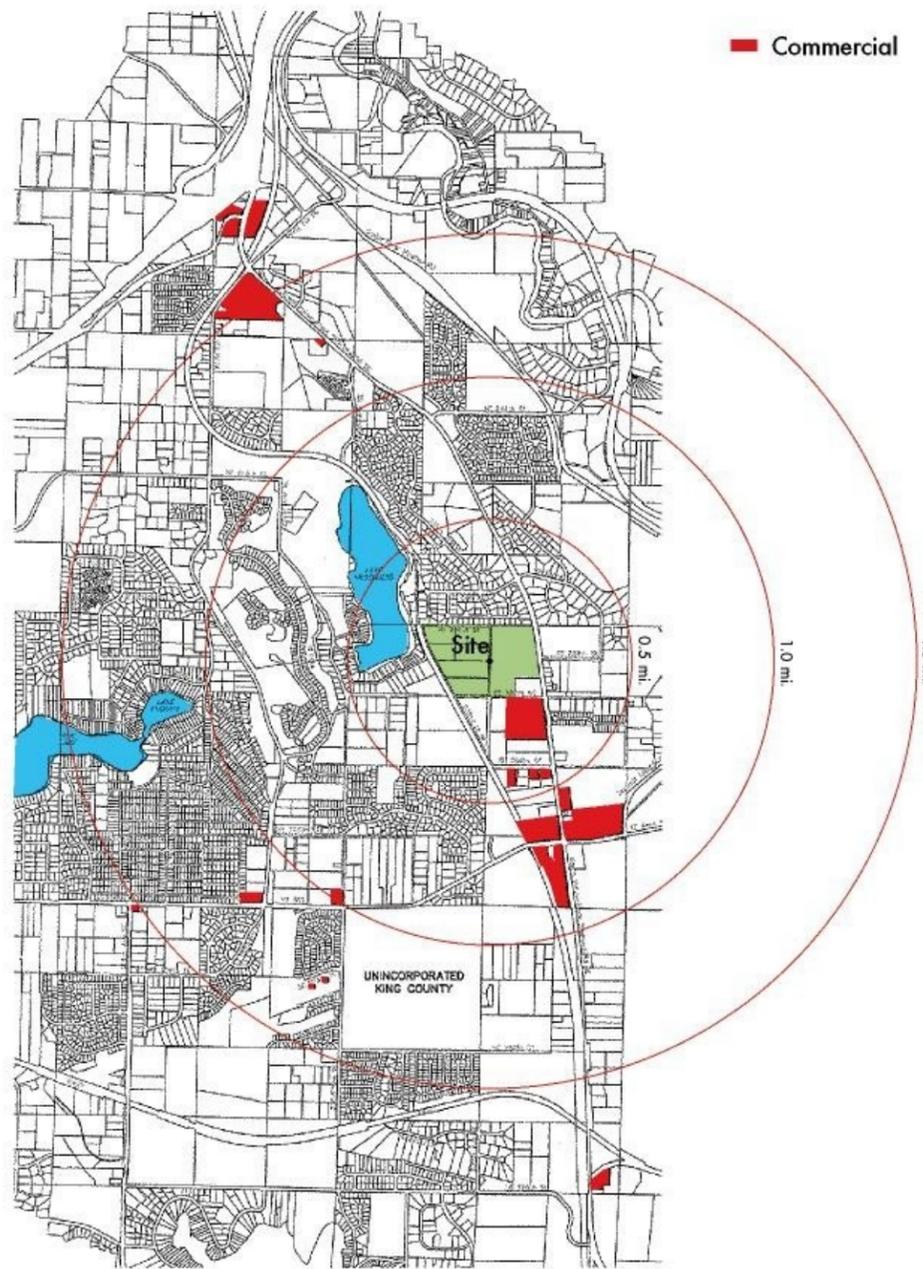
Access can be provided by Maple Valley Highway (SR-169) on the east (vehicular and non-motorized), the S.E. 260<sup>th</sup> Street right-of-way on the south (vehicular and non-motorized), and the Lake Wilderness Trail on the west (non-motorized). Accordingly, the Site can be understood as having two widely divergent forms of access and visibility. Maple Valley Highway can provide access and visibility from a regional, primarily vehicular route that transects the City. Conversely, the Lake Wilderness Trail can provide non-motorized access and visibility from a local, informal, non-motorized facility that transects the City (see map, "Site in Relationship to Existing Public Facilities and Public/Private Open Space System", page 33).

#### **Maple Valley Highway**

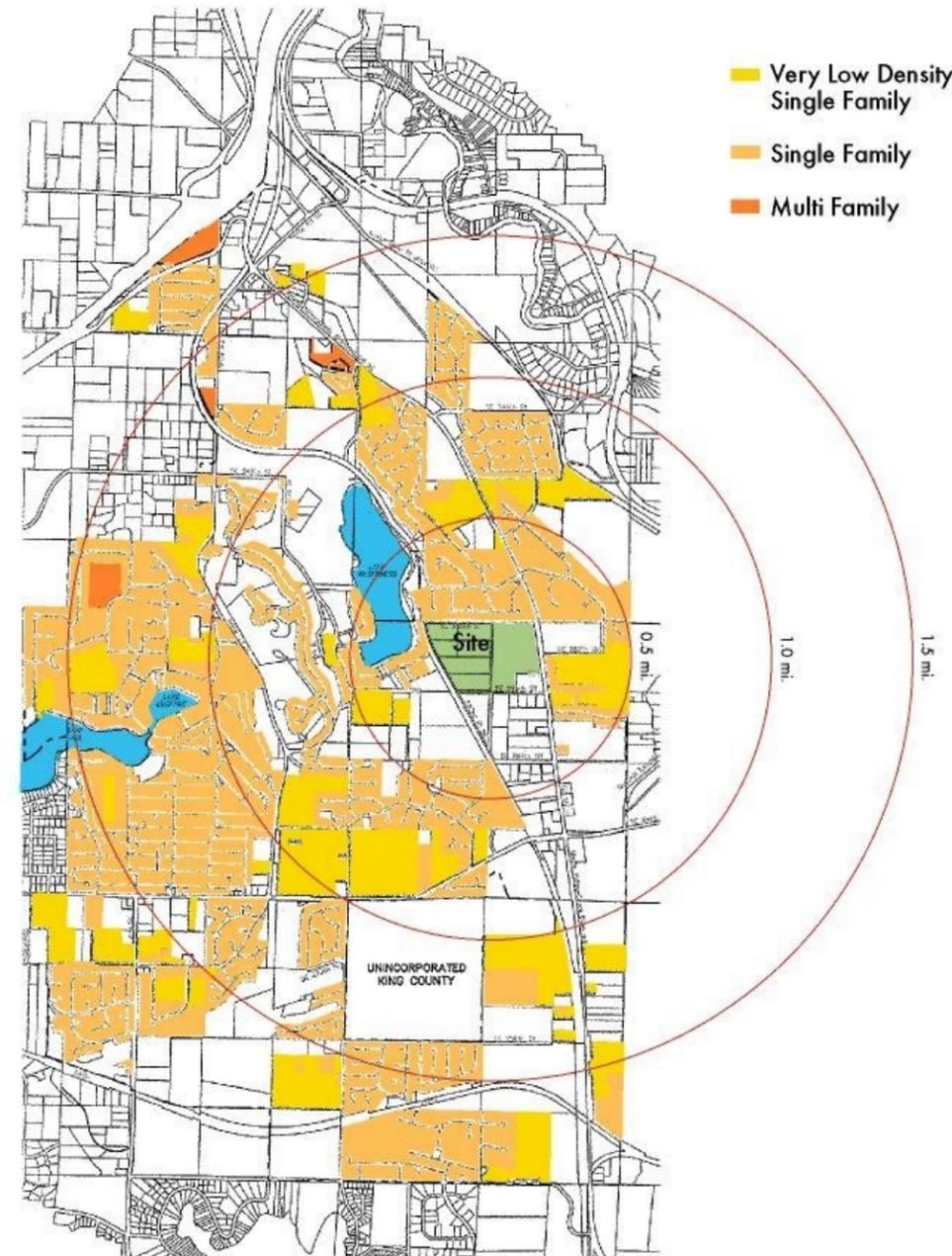
Maple Valley Highway (SR-169) is a moderately busy State highway with current daily volumes of 12,000 to 14,000 trips traveling at speeds typically between 40 and 50 miles per hour.

Maple Valley Highway provides potential for direct access to the Site. The safest point of access to the City from this route may be directly opposite the Tahoma School District entry drive.

Given potential visibility by a significant number of passing local and regional travelers, this portion of the Site provides the potential to create a highly recognizable "front door" as well as a potential setting for a highly visible, regionally-significant civic presence within the City.



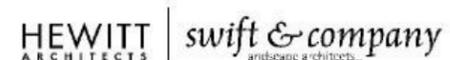
Site in Relationship to Existing Commercial Uses



Site in Relationship to Existing Residential Uses

Maple Valley Site Concept Plan: Site in Relationship to Existing Commercial Uses & Existing Residential Uses

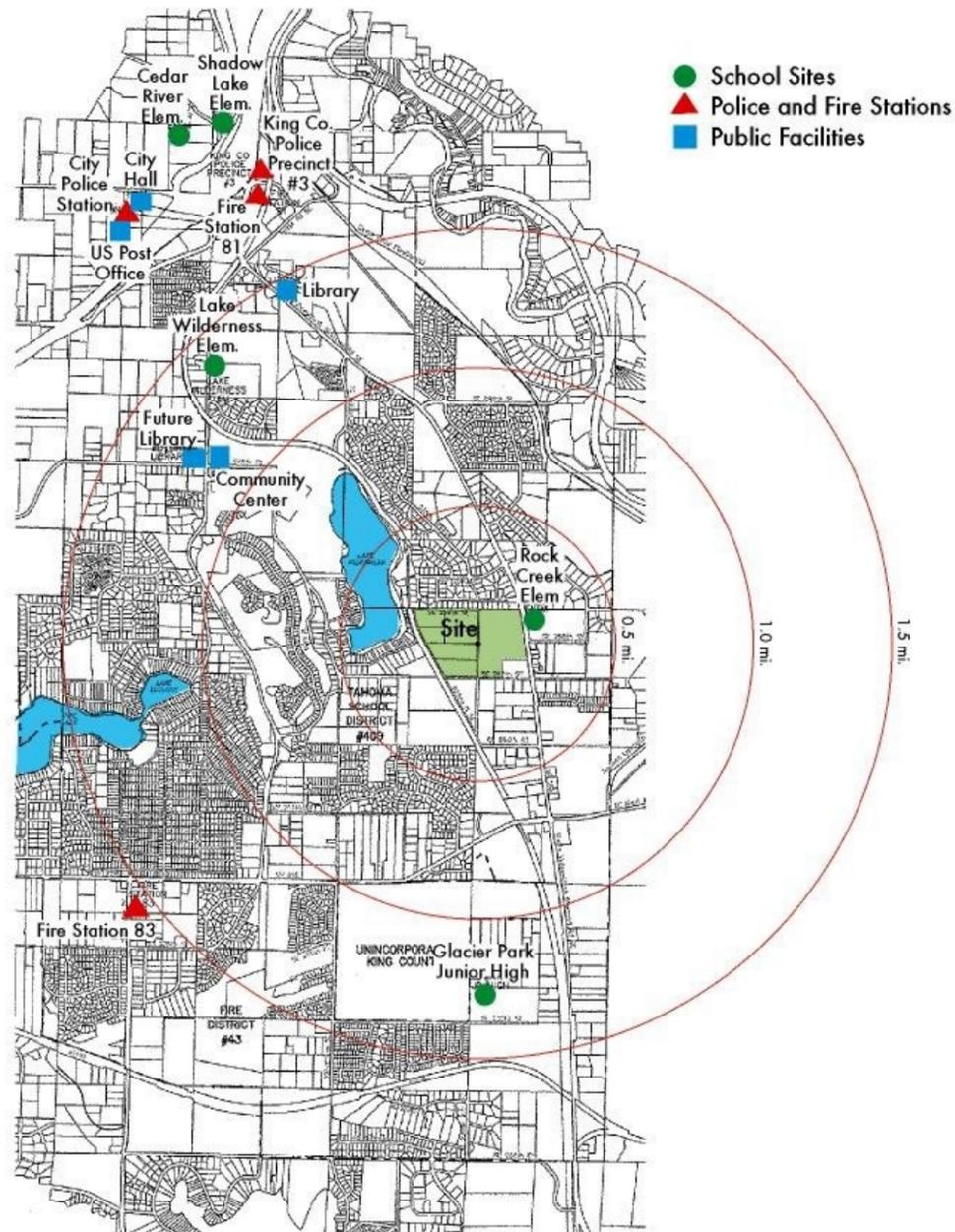
July 25, 2001  





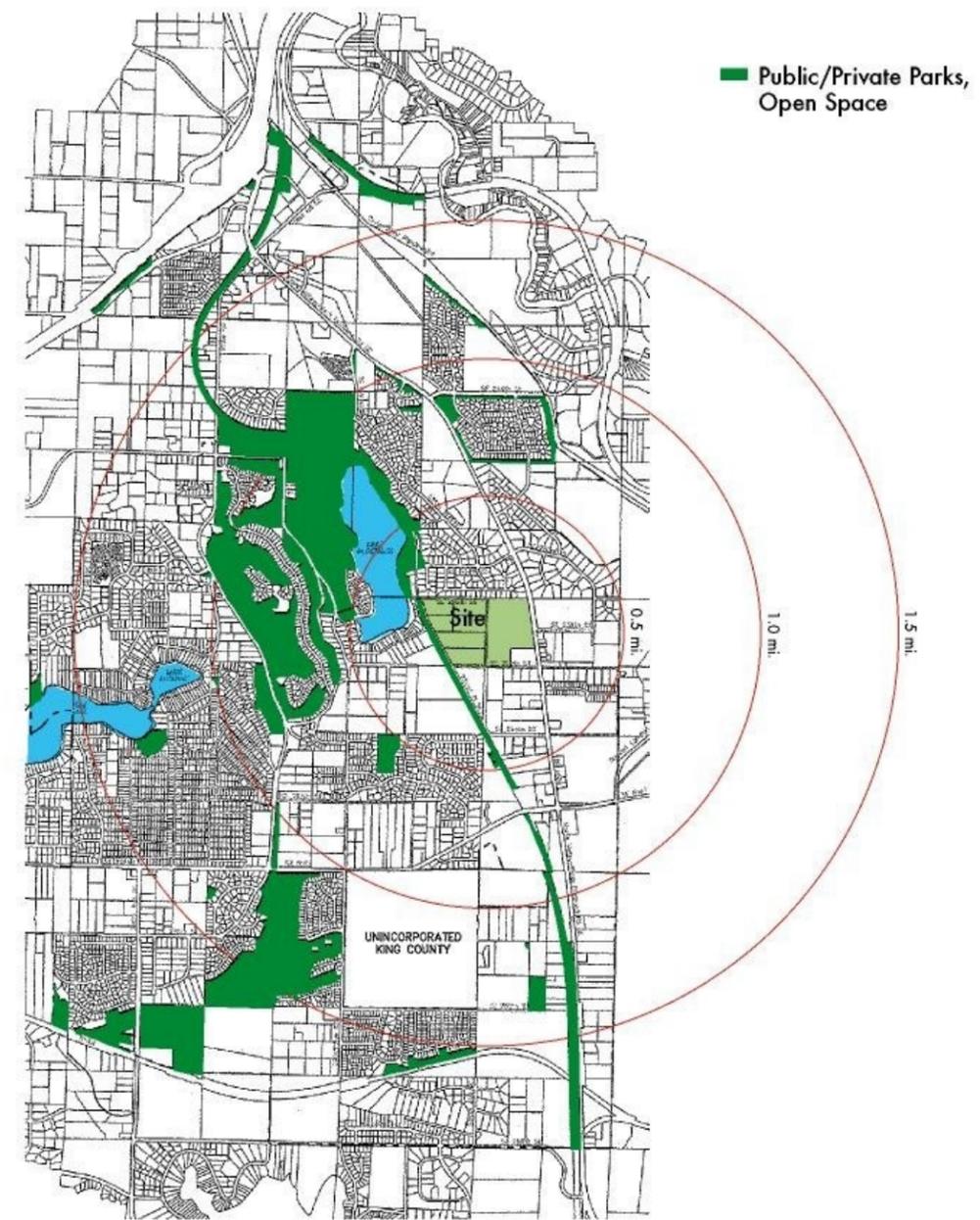






Site in Relationship to Existing Public Facilities

- School Sites
- ▲ Police and Fire Stations
- Public Facilities



Site in Relationship to Existing Public/Private Parks & Open Space

- Public/Private Parks, Open Space

Maple Valley Site Concept Plan: Site in Relationship to Existing Public Facilities & Public /Private Open Space System

July 25, 2001  





### **S.E. 260th Street Right-Of-Way**

The S.E. 260<sup>th</sup> Street right-of-way offers the potential to link the “regional face” of the Site along Maple Valley Highway with the “local face” of the Site along the Lake Wilderness Trail. It also allows for the provision of potential vehicular, pedestrian, or bicycle connections to the Lake Wilderness Trail as well as potential pedestrian connections to single-family residences further west of the Site.

Provision for access to the uses adjacent to the southern boundary of the Site will require improvements to the S.E. 260<sup>th</sup> Street right-of-way. In addition to enhancing the appearance of the southerly edge of the Site, such improvements could provide additional east/west vehicular and pedestrian connections within the City as a whole. Further, there is potential to develop connections south to S.E. 264<sup>th</sup> Street along an existing north/south right-of-way directly south of the Site (235<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.E.).

Assuming that the S.E. 260<sup>th</sup> Street right-of-way will be improved, development standards for the adjoining land to the south may need to be considered to ensure an appropriate interface with the Site. The character of improvements to and development along S.E. 260<sup>th</sup> Street will set the tone of the entry sequence into the southerly portions of the Site. Accordingly, they may require careful consideration in terms of development standards.

### **Lake Wilderness Trail**

The Lake Wilderness Trail can be considered an existing “pedestrian main street” that connects public and private uses found on the Lake Wilderness side of the Site. Accordingly, it can provide vital and easily recognizable pedestrian and bicycle entry routes to the westerly portions of the Site.

The Lake Wilderness Trail offers an opportunity to provide a second, local “front door” to the Site.

#### **3.1.7 Existing Infrastructure**

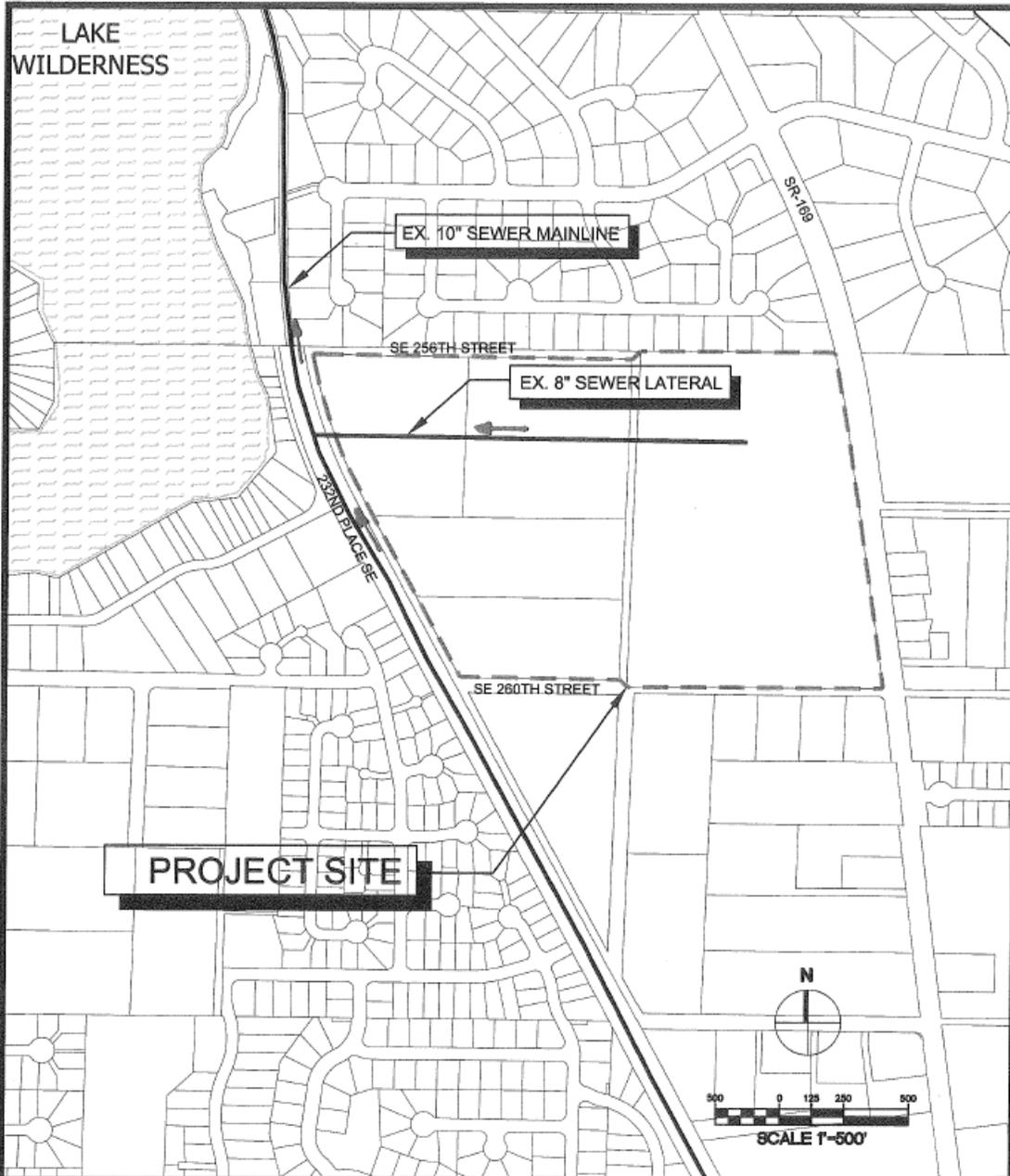
Existing infrastructure surrounding and potentially serving the Site is described in “Existing Sewer Service” and Existing Water Service”, pages 34 and 35.

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June 27, 2005



 DESIGN COMPANY	Maple Valley Concept Plan
	FIGURE 2 EXISTING SEWER SERVICE

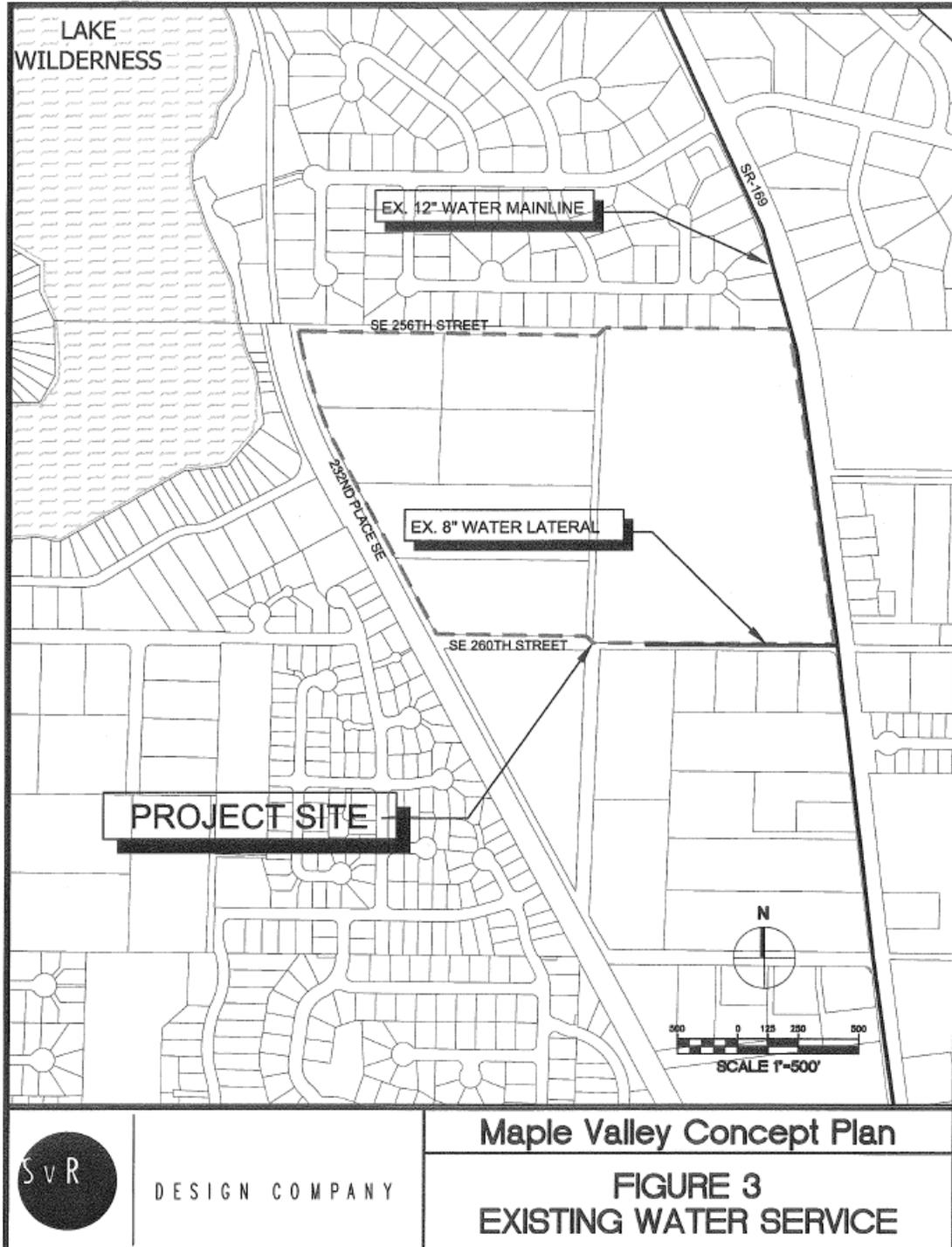


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June 27, 2005



### **3.2 Site Components**

The existing topography subdivides the Site into several different precincts. From east to west, these include: (1) the Eastern Frontage, (2) the Eastern Slope, (3) the Big Leaf Maple Community, (4) the Western Plateau, (5) the Western Slope, and (6) the Northern Ridge (see maps, “Potential Primary Development Zones” and “Priority Preservation Zones,” pages 39 and 40).

#### **3.2.1 Eastern Frontage**

This area of the Site is comprised of an approximately 7-acre level, triangular frontage. It lies adjacent to Maple Valley Highway and is somewhat separated from the remainder of the Site by a pronounced, diagonal, north/south slope. The Eastern Frontage is the portion most visible to vehicular users.

##### *Key Characteristics*

Traffic associated with Maple Valley Highway generates substantial noise on a 24-hour basis, with concentrations for approximately 14 hours per day. This noise potentially limits quiet or passive uses of the Eastern Frontage.

Single-family residences lie to the north of the Eastern Frontage. Accommodation will need to be made for the residential area to address “buffering” from the visual and sound impacts of unwanted access from new uses in the area.

Commercial/light industrial uses lie to the south of the Eastern Frontage, which are also potential uses of the Site. The uses should be buffered to protect from visual and sound impacts, while at the same time, promoting user connections. There may be a need to enhance the frontage of the property immediately south of the Site to extend the visual character of the Site at this location.

The existing terrain forms a level triangular “platform” that is raised two to four feet above Maple Valley Highway. The existing natural drainage is to the northwest and southeast from a high point in the center of the “platform,” and the drainage patterns can be used and enhanced.

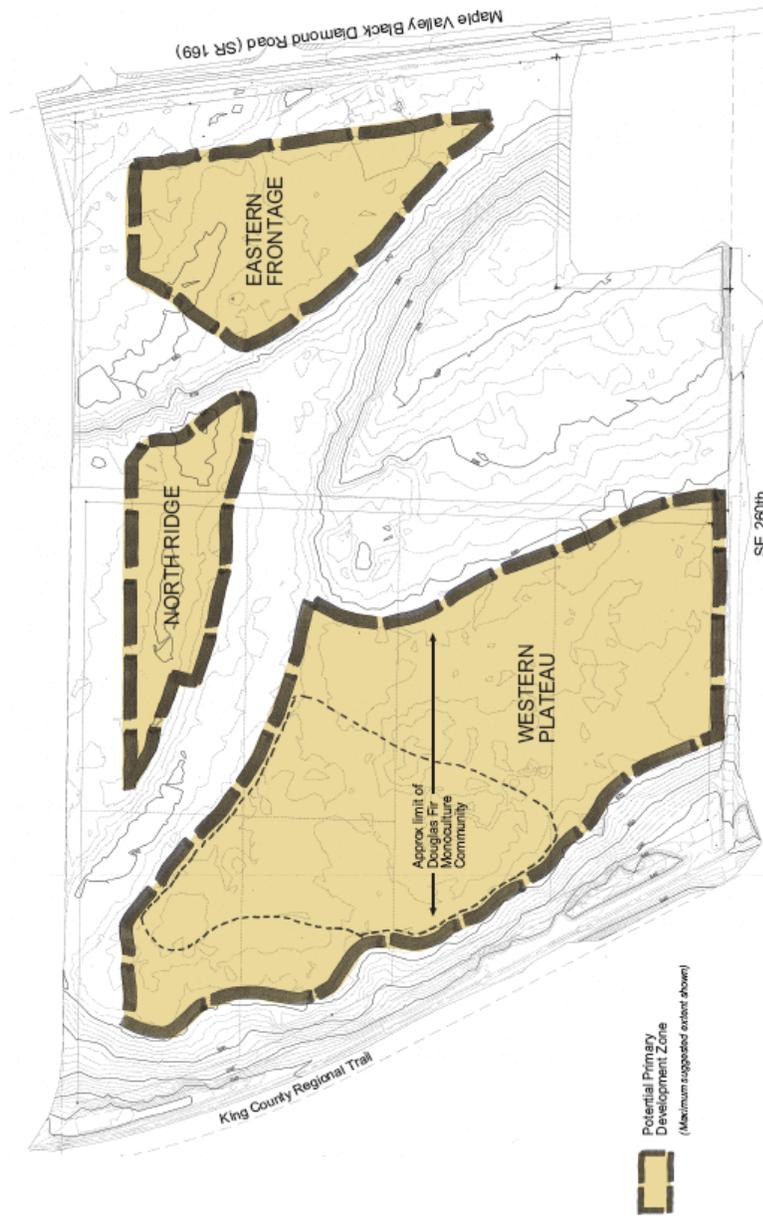
The area has potential for early to late morning sun exposure and limited afternoon exposure due to slope and vegetation to the west. The Site is protected from inclement southwesterly winds by the slope and by trees to the west. Selective clearing will be necessary to develop

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LEGACY PROJECT

June 27, 2005



POTENTIAL PRIMARY DEVELOPMENT ZONES



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June 27, 2005



PRIORITY PRESERVATION ZONES

Insert Potential



pleasant, sunny spaces and afternoon sunlight that penetrates the forested slope to the west and to provide pleasant dappled light.

A mature second growth forest community, including an approximately 200-foot wide band of Douglas Fir-dominant growth is immediately adjacent to Maple Valley Highway. The remainder of the area is occupied by a mixed coniferous/hardwood community that has significant understory complexity and some grass clearings. Forest cover in this area is a structurally and visually complex forest ecosystem and has some habitat value. This complexity of existing vegetation provides opportunities for selective removal while maintaining the integrity of the overall forest structure.

Views are heavily impacted and limited by existing vegetation and landform. Selective clearing, pruning, and related replanting can develop and focus views from Maple Valley Highway into this area as well as into the western portion of the Site and beyond. Given selective clearing to develop long views from the south, the proximity of this area to Maple Valley Highway provides opportunities to visually “market” the Site and to establish identity.

### **3.2.2 Eastern Slope**

The Eastern Frontage, described above, is bounded to the west by a pronounced slope having a height that varies from 10 to 35 feet, and a gradient of 8 percent or more. The Eastern Slope essentially subdivides the Site into two major districts. The terrain of the Eastern Slope allows opportunities to “slip” paths and roads through the existing topography to western portions of the Site. Portions of the slope are Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible.

### **3.2.3 Big Leaf Maple Community**

The Big Leaf Maple Community is a feature that offers a unique opportunity and requires careful attention.

Located in the south-central portion of the Site, the area is occupied by a mature Big Leaf Maple-dominant community that is characterized by substantial plant diversity and an uncommon spatial, physical character provided by a high, arching, well-developed forest canopy.

### **3.2.4 Western Frontage**

The Western Frontage is comprised of a level, approximately 8-acre area that occupies the southwest corner of the Site adjacent to the S.E. 260<sup>th</sup> Street right-of-way. The land south of S.E. 260<sup>th</sup> Street is currently used for outdoor storage and light industrial businesses.

## Key Characteristics

The area is underlain by relatively level terrain that extends north to a swale near the northerly boundary of the Site. The area does not exhibit an obvious natural drainage system; natural drainage patterns need clarification and enhancement. Gradual slope to the east and north provide the potential to “slip” paths and roads into the terrain with minimal visual impact. However, where the Site is very level, the visual impact of roads and paths will need careful consideration. The majority of the terrain is “easy” in terms of providing ADA accessibility.

The area has potential for late morning and afternoon sun exposure, while landforms and trees limit early morning and late afternoon sun exposure. The Western Frontage is protected from northerly winds by intervening landforms and vegetation. However, it is not protected from inclement southwesterly winds. Given selective clearing, there is an opportunity to orient new development to the sun and to provide pleasant, sunny spaces on the Site. Given the lack of existing vegetation to the south, there may be a need to protect new improvements from inclement southwesterly winds and weather. Late afternoon and early morning light penetrating through the forest onto the Site will provide pleasant dappled light.

The Western Frontage is occupied by two variants of a mature, second-growth, predominantly Douglas fir forest community. The Douglas fir monoculture community that occupies the western portion of this area has limited species and age diversity. The Douglas fir-dominant community that occupies the eastern portion of the Western Frontage has significant species and age diversity. The visual and structural complexity of the existing forest cover enhances opportunities for selective clearing while maintaining the overall high integrity of the forest structure. Nonetheless, the potential for storm blow-down of existing trees, due to exposure to the southwest winds, will require evaluation.

Views from this area are heavily impacted by existing vegetation and landforms to the east and by adjoining use to the south. Selective clearing and pruning can provide long views into the area, thereby enhancing its apparent size and depth. Future development to the south will impact the character of views.

Access to the Western Frontage can be provided via S.E. 260<sup>th</sup> Street, the Lake Wilderness Trail, and inter-Site networks.

### 3.2.5 Western Slope

The Western Slope is a north/south Slope that marks the extreme western boundary of the Site. It provides potential views to the west over Lake Wilderness and single-family residences lie to the west of the Western Slope. Limited and periodic long views into the Site are possible when traveling northbound on Lake Wilderness Trail. The western-most portion of the Western Slope is steep and includes gradients of 20 percent or more. Provision of ADA access between the Site and the Lake Wilderness Trail likely will require extensive grading and switchbacks.

### **3.2.6 Northern Frontage**

The Northern Frontage is comprised of a level area that is bounded by a shallow swale to the south and the existing residential uses abutting the property line to the north. Vehicular routes do not serve the area at this time. Thus, access to this portion of the Site will need to be accommodated by an internal Site circulation system.

#### *Key Characteristics*

The underlying terrain is relatively level and is bounded on the south by a shallow swale where transitional gradients are approximately 12 percent. The swale provides a natural drainage system that exists to the north. The gradual slope associated with this area provides the potential to slip paths and roads into the existing topography with minimal visual and physical impact to the surrounding landscape. However, where the terrain is very level, the visual impact of the roads and paths will need careful consideration. The Northern Frontage is “easy” in terms of providing ADA accessibility.

Given the existing forest cover, selective clearing will be required to develop existing potential for late morning and afternoon sun exposure for new development and open spaces. Protection from inclement southwesterly winds is provided by landforms and existing vegetation.

Generally, the Northern Frontage is occupied by a maturing, second-growth forest community composed of a monoculture of Douglas fir having limited species and age diversity. The eastern and southern portions of the Northern Frontage are similarly occupied by Douglas fir, but have significant species and age diversity. The swale includes a western red cedar sub-community that provides visual “landmarks” within the Site. Clearing for open space and development could be accommodated in the monoculture forest area. The visual and structural complexity of the overlying forest communities provides opportunities for selective removal of trees and vegetation while maintaining the integrity of the overall forest structure. Nonetheless, storm blow-down of remaining trees will require careful evaluation where clearing is to be considered.

The potential for views is heavily impacted and limited by existing vegetation, adjoining development, as well as adjacent landforms. Selective clearing and pruning can develop long views into and from the Northern Frontage, thereby enhancing apparent size and depth.

Access to the Northern Frontage must be accommodated via an internal road and/or trail system. Circulation routes must be planned and designed in a manner that acknowledges and respects the overall informal and natural characteristics of the Site.

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