

5. NATURAL AREAS: VISIONS AND KEY USES

The overall vision for the Site includes several natural areas as described below.

These areas have been identified, in a preliminary manner, in the discussion of Site Components in Section 3.2 above. They include: (1) the Big Leaf Maple Community in the south-central portion of the Site adjacent to SE 260th Street; (2) the Douglas Fir Community that covers the Western Slope adjacent to the Lake Wilderness Trail; (3) the Douglas Fir Community that occupies the Northern Plateau adjacent to residential uses at the north-central portion of the Site; and (4) the Douglas Fir Community that covers the Eastern Slope which parallels Maple Valley Highway in the eastern portion of the Site (see “Landscape Units”, page 53).

Acknowledging that the precise boundaries of these areas will be the focus of further, more detailed study, plans for the Site must include natural areas that are substantially consistent with those identified in Section 3.2.

5.1 Overall Vision

5.1.1 Natural Areas

A substantial portion of the Site shall be comprised of natural areas that are intended to preserve the physical, visual, and ecological characteristics of existing, well-developed forest communities. As appropriate, these areas may be treated as informally or formally designated open space.

5.1.2 Preservation

Some or all of the natural areas included on the Site shall preserve tangible examples of the rural heritage of the City and protect the natural beauty and tranquility that they contribute to the existing character of the community. Additionally, they shall preserve existing ecological functions and wildlife habitats as well as provide educational and passive recreational opportunities for Maple Valley citizens.

Accordingly, improvements provided in natural areas must be limited to those modifications that enhance enjoyment of the immediate area and/or support appropriate educational or passive recreational use. Additionally, the design of such improvements must be respectful of, and compatible with, their surroundings and be “low-impact” in physical character.

5.2 Visions for Natural Areas and Related Key Uses

Visions for specific natural areas to be included within the Site as well as key uses and improvements to be accommodated within them are identified below.

5.2.1 Big Leaf Maple Community

Vision

The Big Leaf Maple Community shall provide opportunities to experience and enjoy an uncommon, if not unique, forest community. In addition to allowing direct experience of the natural character as well as the inherent tranquility and beauty of this portion of the Site, this area can provide interpretive or educational opportunities associated with a very special forest community.

Key Uses and Improvements

The Big Leaf Maple Community shall address natural resource preservation and accommodate passive recreational and environmental education/interpretation use.

Improvements included within the Big Leaf Maple Community should include walking, hiking and interpretive trails as well as appropriate interpretive pavilions and/or pedestrian shelters.

5.2.2 Western Slope

Vision

The forested Western Slope must continue to provide the natural character it presently contributes to the southeasterly portion of the adjacent Lake Wilderness area. Additionally, it shall provide a distinctive landscape edge that defines the western border of the Site and buffers the Site from the Lake Wilderness Trail.

Key Uses and Improvements

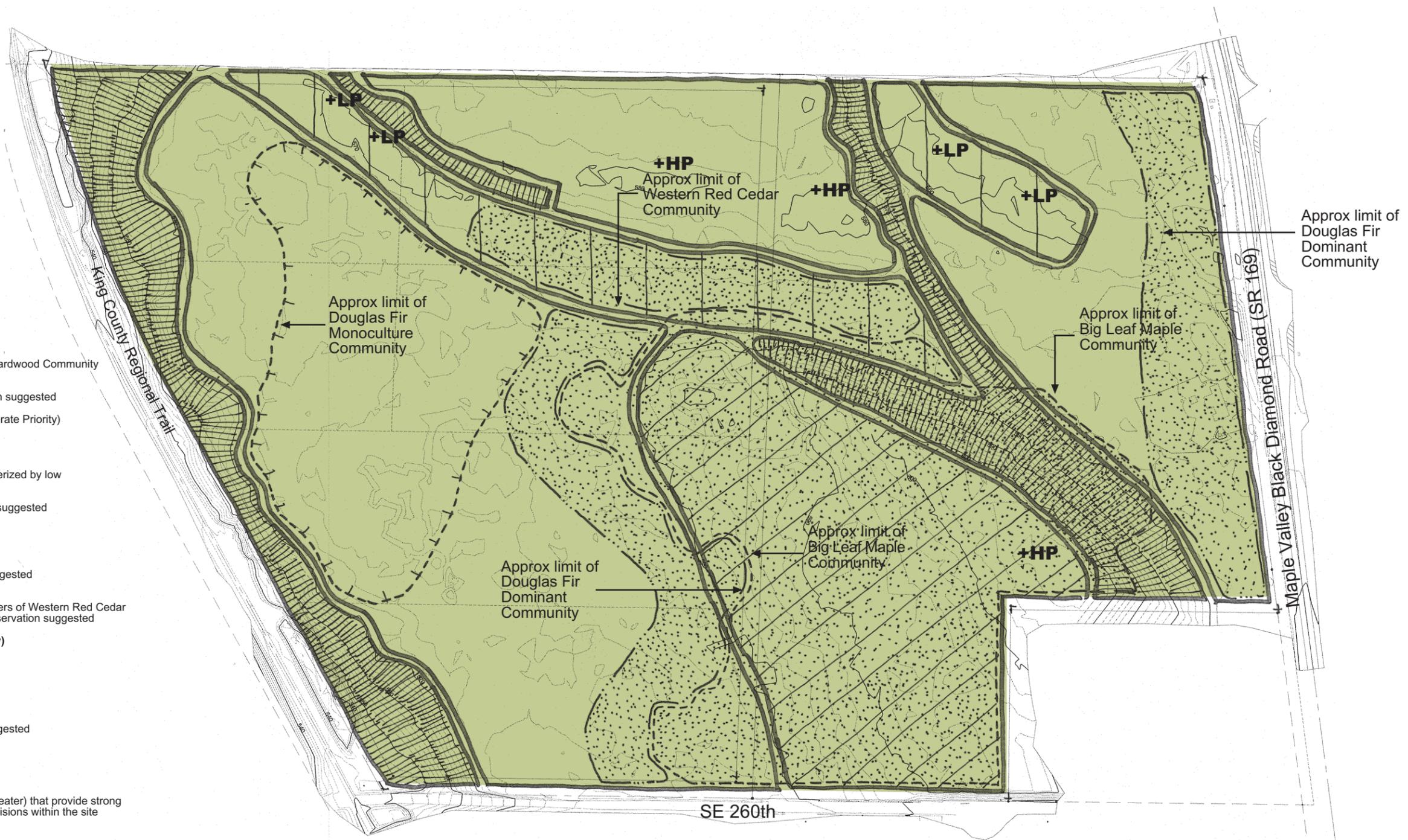
The Western Slope preserves natural resources, provides a landscape buffer and accommodates passive recreational use.

Improvements included within the Western Slope should include walking and hiking trails as well as strategic connections to the Lake Wilderness Trail.

5.2.3 Northern Plateau

Vision

The Northern Plateau shall provide a significant buffer between the Site and single-family residences to the north. Additionally, it shall provide experience of the natural character as well as the inherent beauty and tranquility associated with this portion of the Site. Further, this area can provide interpretive or educational opportunities associated with the overlying Douglas Fir Community.



VEGATATIVE ELEMENTS

Predominant Forest Communities

- Douglas Fir Community and Mixed Coniferous Hardwood Community
 - Forest species diversity is present
 - Size and age diversity is present
 - Moderate priority for preservation / conservation suggested

Specialized Forest Communities (High and Moderate Priority)

- Big-leaf Maple Community
 - Diverse, mature and stable forest community
 - Uncommon forest community type
 - Uncommon spatial / physical character characterized by low density understory and open spatial character
 - Low visual complexity
 - Highest priority for preservation / conservation suggested
- Douglas Fir Dominant Community
 - Noteworthy size and age diversity present
 - Medium to high density understory
 - High visual complexity
 - High priority for preservation / conservation suggested
- Western Red Cedar Sub-community
 - Sub-community composed of substantial numbers of Western Red Cedar
 - High to moderate priority for preservation / conservation suggested

Specialized Forest Communities (Low Priority)

- Douglas Fir Monoculture Community
 - Low forest species diversity present
 - Low size and age diversity present
 - Dense understory
 - Low visual complexity
 - Relatively low value forest community
 - Low priority for preservation / conservation suggested

TOPOGRAPHIC ELEMENTS

- Forested Steep Slopes
 - Moderate and typically steep slopes (10% or greater) that provide strong edges and/or define natural topographic subdivisions within the site
- Forested Central Slope
 - Gentle southwest facing slope (5% to 10%) characterizing the central portion of the site
- Forested Swales
 - Shallow, low-lying and intermittent drainage ways
- Forested Plateaux
 - Relatively large expanses of level or gently rolling terrain

+LP Local Low Point

+HP Local High Point

Approx limit of Douglas Fir Dominant Community

Approx limit of Big Leaf Maple Community

Approx limit of Big-Leaf Maple Community

Approx limit of Douglas Fir Dominant Community

+HP
Approx limit of Western Red Cedar Community

Maple Valley Black Diamond Road (SR 169)

SE 260th

King County Regional Trail

LANDSCAPE UNITS



Maple Valley Place

LEGACY PROJECT

CAC Report to City Council

June 27, 2005

Key Uses and Improvements

The Northern Plateau preserves natural resources, provides a landscape buffer and accommodates passive recreational uses as well as environmental education and interpretative use.

Improvements included within the Northern Plateau should include walking, hiking, jogging, and interpretive trails as well as appropriate interpretive pavilions and/or pedestrian shelters.

5.2.4 Eastern Slope

Vision

In addition to contributing to the existing natural and visual character of the Douglas Fir Community, the Eastern Slope shall provide a prominent landscape edge and a natural landscape background to uses that are located adjacent to Maple Valley Highway.

Key Uses and Improvements

The Eastern Slope preserves natural resources and provides a landscape edge or buffer.

Improvements included within the Eastern Slope should include pedestrian trail connections.

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