

3. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT, SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION

This chapter of the EIS describes existing or baseline conditions for the respective elements of the environment, documents the expected environmental impacts of the proposed action and the alternatives, including the No Action alternative and identifies mitigation measures pertinent to significant adverse impacts. Under SEPA rules, Chapter 197-11-794 WAC, the definition of “significance” is a reasonable likelihood of more than a moderate adverse impact on environmental quality.

Chapter 3 focuses specifically on the elements of the environment (both natural and built environment) that would potentially be subject to significant change from development of the proposed project. Consistent with guidance provided by the SEPA Rules, elements of the environment that clearly would not be significantly affected are not discussed. Based on the results of scoping for this EIS, the City has identified the following elements of the environment for detailed consideration in the EIS (with specific topics indicated in parentheses). These elements are addressed in detail in Sections 3.1 through 3.6, respectively:

1. Earth (Geologic Setting/Site Stability)
2. Water (Surface Water, Ground Water/Seepage, Water Runoff)
3. Plants and Animals (Threatened and Endangered Species, Habitat, Migration Routes)
4. Land Use (Plans and Policies, Neighborhood Character, Open Space, Environmentally Critical Areas)
5. Transportation (Existing and Proposed Street System, Motorized Traffic, Non-motorized Traffic/Pedestrian Movements, Safe School Walking Routes, Safety Hazards)
6. Public Services (Parks and Recreation)

Public comments submitted during the scoping process identified a number of other elements of the environment that interested parties believed should be addressed in the EIS, including noise, odors, air quality and human-use hazards. Potential effects on public services in addition to parks and recreation, primarily education services, were also identified. The City reviewed the substantive information and carefully considered the potential for significant impacts to all elements of the environment raised in the scoping comments. Based on the characteristics of the proposed subdivisions and existing conditions in the surrounding area at that time, the City determined that the potential for significant adverse impacts were warranted only for those elements identified in 1 through 6 above. Based on pertinent information, the City determined that significant adverse impacts were not likely for other SEPA elements of the environment, and that these topics need not be considered in detail in the EIS.

While the City acknowledges there were scoping comments requesting consideration of impacts related to noise, odors, air quality and human-use hazards, the City also determined that these impacts were not probable and/or would not rise to the level of significance, and therefore determined that these environmental health topics did not warrant inclusion in the EIS scope. Moreover, review of the applicable regulatory, land use and physical conditions of the project sites does not indicate the likelihood of probable, significant adverse impacts related to noise, odors, air quality and human-use hazards. The following paragraphs explain some of the rationale.

Noise. Some of the comments remarked that the residents of the proposed Wood Trails subdivision would be subject to noise impacts from the existing uses in the industrial area to the west of the site. Other comments suggested that existing residences in the neighborhood would be subject to increased noise levels because clearing on the Wood Trails site would reduce or eliminate an existing noise buffer, and that those impacts should be addressed in the EIS. The nearby industrial uses have for some time been

subject to the regulatory requirement to meet the Class A noise limits applicable to residential uses (60 dBA during daytime hours and 50 dBA at night) at the western property boundary of the Wood Trails. Therefore, development of the Wood Trails subdivision would not result in a change in the noise limits that the industrial uses would be required to meet. Consideration of applicable physical characteristics indicates there would be little, if any, actual decrease in the noise-reducing capability of the Wood Trails site with the proposed development. As a result, there is no basis to assume existing residents would experience significant adverse effects from noise levels.

Odor. There is also no basis to assume that removal of forest vegetation on a portion of the Wood Trails site would have any measurable effect on the presence or intensity of odors in the neighboring area. Additional discussion of environmental health issues is provided in Section 4.1.1, in the responses to public comments on the Draft EIS.

Public Services. Many scoping comments also expressed concern over the impacts of the proposed development on local schools and/or other public services, and suggested those issues be addressed in the EIS. To make the threshold determination required by SEPA and to identify the scope of the EIS, the City's responsible official reviewed the size and nature of the proposal, the status of various public services and facilities (schools, fire, police and parks), public scoping comments, and scoping input from service providers. The City received no scoping comments or comments on the Draft EIS from other City departments or independent service providers (including, specifically, the Northshore School District) indicating concerns over the potential public service impacts of the proposal. The City distributed copies of the Draft EIS to the service providers, and reasonably concludes the providers would have submitted review comments if they were indeed concerned over impacts.

In addition, during the completion of the Final EIS, the City asked the service providers for a comment letter addressing impacts to their services from the proposal. Fire, Police, and Sewer and Water responded and concluded that services would not be significantly impacted. Based on its review of all applicable information, the City concluded that probable incremental impacts on police, fire and sewer and water from the type and amount of growth associated with the two proposals (a total of 132 residential lots) would not be significant in terms of demand or costs.

With regards to school impacts, the Northshore School District (NSD), particularly the eastern portion of the district where the proposed plats are located, is experiencing slow growth and declining enrollment (NSD 2006). Many schools in this area have excess capacity. Wellington Elementary, for example, is projected to experience a decline in enrollment of approximately 60 students by 2010 and has excess capacity for approximately 117 students. Woodinville High School enrollment is expected to decline by approximately 200 students between now and 2010. Enrollment at Leota Junior High is similarly projected to decline. The NSD calculates that each new single family housing unit contributes 0.63 students, with approximately two-thirds of the total being elementary students. Applying this student generation rate to the proposed plats, the contribution would be a total of 83 students, including 55 elementary students. Adding students to the school district would fill some of the reduced capacity and possibly reduce the potential for school closures. In view of the District's existing capacity, this small number of students was not considered to have a significant adverse impact on enrollment, and was excluded from detailed discussion in the Draft EIS.

The City again reviewed issues pertaining to potential public service impacts when it evaluated the comments on the Draft EIS and developed the Final EIS. Based on that review, the City affirmed its original scoping determination that significant adverse public service impacts were not likely and did not need to be analyzed in detail in the EIS. Additional discussion of public service health issues is provided in Section 4.1.1, in the responses to public comments on the Draft EIS.