

Chapter 2. Introduction

At the direction of the Board of County Commissioners (Board), the Skagit County Planning and Development Services Department (Department) has been working with a Board-appointed transfer of development rights (TDR) Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) to consider the possible development and implementation of a TDR program in Skagit County.

As stated in Resolution No. R20120276 (see Appendix A) appointing the Advisory Committee, its role is to review and provide input on key policy and technical issues and TDR public outreach efforts to County planning staff and consultants, the Planning Commission, and the Board. Specific tasks that the Board assigned to the Advisory Committee through the resolution are as follows:

- Review technical work products developed by project staff and consultants
- Provide input on draft work products
- Share information with respective organizations and agencies
- Bring forward interests, issues, concerns of respective agencies and organizations
- Help to promote awareness and understanding about the TDR project by distributing project information through email, word-of-mouth, and other public outreach methods.

The Advisory Committee includes representatives of organizations and sectors that might directly participate in a Skagit County TDR program, including agriculture, forestry, conservation, development, real estate, banking, and urban planning. As appointed, the Committee also included two at-large members to help represent the interests of Skagit County residents generally:¹

TDR Advisory Committee Members

Charlie Boon, The Boon Team/REMAX	Margaret Fleek, City of Burlington
Mike Hulbert, Skagit County Conservation Futures Advisory Committee	Allen Rozema, Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland
Martha Bray, Skagit Land Trust	Charlie Guildner, People's Bank
Paul Kriegel, Skagit County Forest Advisory Board	Kendra Smith, Skagit County Farmland Legacy Program
Wayne Crider, Skagit Island Counties Builders Association	Jana Hanson, City of Mount Vernon
Bruce Lisser, Lisser & Associates	Ed Stauffer, Skagit County resident
John Doyle, Town of La Conner	Jennifer Hagenow, Skagit County resident
Kim Mower, dairy farmer	Joe Woodmansee, Woodmansee Construction

¹ One of those at-large members, Jennifer Hagenow, moved out of Skagit County partway through the process. Charlie Guildner stopped attending meetings after the first several months.

Advisory Committee members have met more than a dozen times over a nearly two-year period to learn about and offer their thoughts and insights on transfer of development rights and its potential applicability in Skagit County. They have shared their diverse views and perspectives in a respectful manner and have contributed significant knowledge and insight to the Skagit County TDR project. The Board of County Commissioners and project staff and consultants thank them for their dedication to the project and to the Skagit community.

The following individuals have also assisted with the project as experts in the fields of GIS analysis, transfer of development rights, and real estate economics. They have provided technical assistance, analysis, policy guidance, and administrative support to the project:

- Josh Greenberg, Skagit County GIS, who has provided mapping and GIS analysis.
- Taylor Carroll and Nicholas Bratton, TDR policy experts with Forterra,² a conservation and community-building organization based in Seattle, with whom Skagit County contracted for TDR technical assistance.
- Doug Larson, Matt Hoffman, and Ian Loveless, real estate and economic analysts with Heartland, a consulting firm that Skagit County hired to conduct a TDR market analysis.
- Heather Ballash, senior planner with the Washington State Department of Commerce, which oversees the grant that has provided financial assistance to the project. Ballash is also the state's coordinator of the four-county regional TDR program.
- Linda Christensen, grant manager with the Planning & Development Services Department.

Additionally, in early January 2014, Heartland staff and TDR project manager Kirk Johnson held three focus group meetings to seek input on the market and economic analysis from potential TDR program users. These included forest land managers, owners, and conservation professionals; farmers and farmland preservation advocates; and developers and potential receiving-area landowners. Skagit County also extends its appreciation to those participants who are listed in Appendix B .

Several members of the public attended and provided comments at various Advisory Committee meetings.

This report seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of transfer of development rights programs and methods and TDR's potential application in Skagit County. It seeks to reflect the varied views and opinions of Advisory Committee members and others who have participated in project discussions about TDR.

² Formerly the Cascade Land Conservancy.

The resolution appointing the Advisory Committee did not formally task it with developing consensus recommendations about implementation of TDR in Skagit County. However, this report does seek to identify areas of general agreement or disagreement within the Committee on key issues, including whether:

- Additional land conservation measures are warranted in Skagit County beyond those already contained in the county’s comprehensive plan and development regulations and offered by public and private programs in Skagit County.
- Some form of TDR program should be implemented in Skagit County.
- Adequate demand exists or can be created through public policy actions to make a TDR program effective here; and
- Various receiving and sending areas under consideration through this process should be included in a County TDR program if one is implemented.

Where information, data, or recommendations are derived from sources other than the Advisory Committee—for instance, from published reports, from the policy or technical analyses conducted by Forterra, Heartland, or other entities for this or other TDR projects—the report cites the origins of that material.

Advisory Committee members had an opportunity to comment on a draft of the report at a Committee meeting held on June 4, 2014. They were also provided an opportunity to submit written statements for inclusion in the report. Several Committee members submitted written statements, which are included in Appendix C.