

**KING COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND PARKS
WATER AND LAND RESOURCES DIVISION**

**Report to the King County Hearing Examiner for Property
Enrollment in the Public Benefit Rating System (PBRs)**

July 29, 2021 – Public Hearing

APPLICANT: Happy Valley Eastside Inc.

File No. E20CT034

A. GENERAL INFORMATION:

1. Owner: Happy Valley Eastside Inc.
Mark Clark, President
23301 NE Redmond Fall City Road
Redmond, WA 98053
2. Property location: south and abutting 23301 NE Redmond-Fall City Road
Redmond, WA 98053
3. Zoning: RA10
4. STR: NE-22-25-06
5. PBRs categories requested by landowner:

Open space resources

- Buffer to public or current use classified land
- Rural open space
- Special animal site
- Surface water quality buffer
- Watershed protection area

Bonus category

- Conservation easement or historic easement

NOTE: The undeveloped property contains multiple wetlands, springs and a fish bearing stream. At this time, a natively vegetated buffer that meets or exceeds buffer requirements to these critical areas is unlikely (see Exhibit 7). The landowner has declined to provide a survey or study that would determine each wetland rating and stream classification (see Exhibit 8) and their associated boundaries and buffers. Without this information, it cannot be determined if there is at least 10% additional acreage outside the required buffers (as required by King County Code, 20.36.190.E.3), **Therefore, this property does not qualify for enrollment in PBRs.**

Exhibit no.	D1
Case name	Happy Valley Eastside Inc.
Case number	E20CT034
Date received	7/29/2021
KING COUNTY HEARING EXAMINER	

6. Parcel:	222506-9073
Total acreage:	70.00
Requested PBRs:	70.00
Home site/excluded area:	70.00
Recommended PBRs:	0.00

NOTE: The attached map (2019 aerial photo) outlines in yellow the parcel boundaries.

B. FACTS:

1. Zoning in the vicinity: Properties in the vicinity are zoned IP, OP, NBP, R1, RA2.5, RA5 and RA10.
2. Development of the subject property and resource characteristics of open space area: The property is undeveloped. The open space portion of the property consists of a large wetland on the northern two-thirds of the property and deciduous and coniferous forest with native understory on the southern third of the property. Additionally, there are two springs, Type F stream (see attached map) and wetlands present throughout the southern third of the property.
3. Site use: The property is undeveloped.
4. Access: The property is accessed from NE 31st Way.
5. Appraised value for 2020 (based on Assessor’s information dated 7/1/21):

<u>Parcel #222506-9073</u>	<u>Land</u>	<u>Improvements</u>	<u>Total</u>
Appraised value	\$230,000.00	\$0.00	\$230,000.00
Tax applied	\$2,504.83	\$0.00	\$2,504.83

NOTE * Participation in PBRs reduces the appraised land value for the portion of the property enrolled resulting in a lower taxable value.

C. REQUIREMENTS SPECIFIED BY KING COUNTY CODE (KCC):

KCC 20.36.010 Purpose and intent.

It is in the best interest of the county to maintain, preserve, conserve and otherwise continue in existence adequate open space lands for the production of food, fiber and forest crops, and to assure the use and enjoyment of natural resources and scenic beauty for the economic and social well-being of the county and its citizens.

It is the intent of this chapter to implement RCW Chapter 84.34, as amended, by establishing procedures, rules and fees for the consideration of applications for public benefit rating system assessed valuation on "open space land" and for current use assessment on "farm and agricultural land" and "timber land" as those lands are defined in RCW 84.34.020.

The provisions of RCW chapter 84.34, and the regulations adopted thereunder shall govern the matters not expressly covered in this chapter.

KCC 20.36.100 Public benefit rating system for open space land – definitions and eligibility.

- A. To be eligible for open space classification under the public benefit rating system, property must contain one or more qualifying open space resources and have at least five points as determined under this section. The department will review each application and recommend award of credit for current use of property that is the subject of the application. In making such recommendation, the department will utilize the point system described in section B. and C. below.
- B. The following open space resources are each eligible for the points indicated:
1. Public recreation area – five points
 2. Aquifer protection area – five points
 3. Buffer to public or current use classified land – three points
 4. Equestrian-pedestrian-bicycle trail linkage – thirty-five points
 5. Active trail linkage – fifteen or twenty-five points
 6. Farm and agricultural conservation land – five points
 7. Forest stewardship land – five points
 8. Historic landmark or archaeological site: buffer to a designated site – three points
 9. Historic landmark or archaeological site: designated site – five points
 10. Historic landmark or archaeological site: eligible site – three points
 11. Rural open space – five points
 12. Rural stewardship land – five points
 13. Scenic resource, viewpoint, or view corridor – five points
 14. Significant plant or ecological site – five points
 15. Significant wildlife or salmonid habitat – five points
 16. Special animal site – three points
 17. Surface water quality buffer – five points
 18. Urban open space – five points
 19. Watershed protection area – five points
- C. Property qualifying for an open space category in subsection B. of this section may receive credit for additional points as follows:
1. Resource restoration - five points
 2. Additional surface water quality buffer - three or five points
 3. Contiguous parcels under separate ownership - two points
 4. Conservation easement of historic easement – fifteen points
 5. Public access - points dependent on level of access
 - a. Unlimited public access - five points
 - b. Limited public access - sensitive areas - five points
 - c. Environmental education access – three points
 - d. Seasonal limited public access - three points
 - e. None or members only – zero points
 6. Easement and access – thirty-five points

D. 2020 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN POLICIES AND TEXT:

E-101 In addition to its regulatory authority, King County should use incentives to protect and restore the natural environment whenever practicable. Incentives shall be monitored and periodically reviewed to determine their effectiveness in terms of protecting natural resources.

NOTE: Monitoring of participating lands is the responsibility of both department PBRs staff and the landowner. This issue is addressed in the Resource Information document (page 4) and detailed below in Recommendation #B10.

E-112a The protection of lands where development would pose hazards to health, property, important ecological functions or environmental quality shall be achieved through acquisition, enhancement, incentive programs and appropriate regulations. The following critical areas are particularly susceptible and shall be protected in King County:

- a. Floodways of 100-year floodplains;
- b. Slopes with a grade of 40% or more or landslide hazards that cannot be mitigated;
- c. Wetlands and their protective buffers;
- d. Aquatic areas, including streams, lakes, marine shorelines and their protective buffers;
- e. Channel migration hazard areas;
- f. Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas;
- g. Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas; and
- h. Volcanic hazard areas.

E-421 Terrestrial and aquatic habitats should be conserved and enhanced to protect and improve conditions for fish and wildlife.

NOTE: PBRs is an incentive program provided to encourage voluntary protection of open space resources and maintain high quality resource lands.

E-429 King County should provide incentives for private landowners who are seeking to remove invasive plants and noxious weeds and replace them with native plants, such as providing technical assistance or access to appropriate native plants.

NOTE: Participation in PBRs requires landowners address invasive plant and noxious weed control and removal within enrolled portions of a property. Replacement with native vegetation is also encouraged via the implementation of approved forest stewardship, rural stewardship or resource restoration plans.

E-443 King County should promote voluntary wildlife habitat enhancement projects by private individuals and businesses through educational, active stewardship, and incentive programs.

E-476 King County should identify upland areas of native vegetation that connect wetlands to upland habitats and that connect upland habitats to each other. The county should seek protection of these areas through acquisition, stewardship plans, and incentive programs such as the Public Benefit Rating System and the Transfer of Development Rights Program.

E-504 King County should protect native plant communities by encouraging management and control of nonnative invasive plants, including aquatic plants. Environmentally sound methods of vegetation control should be used to control noxious weeds.

NOTE: Lands participating in PBRS provide valuable resource protection and promote the preservation or enhancement of native vegetation. Addressing nonnative vegetation (invasive plant species), through control and eradication is a PBRS requirement.

E-449 King County shall promote retention of forest cover and significant trees using a mix of regulations, incentives, and technical assistance.

R-605 Forestry and agriculture best management practices are encouraged because of their multiple benefits, including natural resource preservation and protection.

NOTE: The implementation of an approved forest stewardship, farm management or rural stewardship plan benefits natural resources, such as wildlife habitat, stream buffers and groundwater protection, as well as fosters the preservation of sustainable resources.

E. PBRS CATEGORIES REQUESTED and DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION:

Open space resources

- Buffer to public and current use classified land
In order to be eligible for this category, the enrolling acreage must abut and provide a buffer to a publicly owned park, trail or forest, land legally required to remain in a natural state, a state or federal highway, or be adjacent to property participating in current use taxation program under chapter 84.33 or 84.34 RCW. The buffer shall be no less than fifty feet in length and width and be natively vegetated. The property does not meet category criteria and therefore, credit for this category is not recommended.
- Rural open space
In order to be eligible for this category, the enrolling acreage must be located in the rural area and contain at least ten acres of native vegetation. Although the property is located in the rural area and contains more than sixty-five acres of contiguous native open space, the property is not eligible to participate in PBRS (see note on page 1). Credit for this category is not recommended.
- Significant wildlife or salmonid habitat
The property contains habitat for numerous wildlife species, including foraging and nesting habitat for the pileated woodpecker, which is listed as a candidate species of concern by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. However, the property is

not eligible to participate in PBRs (see note on page 1) and credit for this category is not recommended.

- Special animal site

Award of credit for this category requires the property to include or be adjacent to a portion of the county's designated wildlife habitat network or be identified as an urban natural area by the State's priority habitat and species project. The county's recognized wildlife habitat network is identified to be near the northern property line however, the property is not eligible to participate in PBRs (see note on page 1) and credit for this category is not recommended.

- Surface water quality buffer

In order to be eligible for this category, the enrolling land must be providing a qualifying buffer of native vegetation to a lake, pond, stream, wetland or shoreline within the enrolling portion of a property. The property contains many critical areas: wetlands, springs, and a fish bearing stream, but it is unlikely that the property is providing a buffer greater than 1.5 times that required for these resources. credit for this category is not recommended.

- Watershed protection area

In order to be eligible for this category, the enrolling area must be contiguous, consist of additional native forest cover beyond that required for the property, and be at least 65% of the entire property acreage. For this property, at least 45.50 contiguous forested acres are required to participate for credit to be awarded. However, less than 35% of the property is forested (~45 acres is open wetland/standing water and not forested). The property does not meet this category's criteria, therefore, credit for this category is not recommended.

Bonus category

- Conservation easement or historic easement

The landowners worked with King County Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program staff to have a conservation easement produced and recorded (recording #20200131001514, Exhibit 6). However, the property is not eligible to participate in PBRs (see note on page 1), and therefore, credit for this category is not recommended.

NOTE: It is important to note that enrollment in the PBRs program requires the control and removal of invasive plant species. This issue is addressed in the Resource Information document (page 3) and below in Recommendation #B7.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. CONCLUSIONS:

1. Approval of the subject request would be consistent with the specific purpose and intent of KCC 20.36.010.
2. Approval of the subject request would be consistent with policy E-101 of the King County Comprehensive Plan.
3. Of the points recommended, the subject request meets the mandatory criteria of KCC 20.36.100 as indicated:

Open space resources

- Buffer to public or current use classified land 0
- Significant wildlife and salmonid habitat 0
- Special animal site 0
- Surface water quality buffer 0
- Watershed protection area 0

Bonus category

- Conservation easement or historic easement 0

TOTAL 0 points

PUBLIC BENEFIT RATING

For the purpose of taxation, 0 points result in 100% of appraised value and a 0% reduction in taxable value for the portion of land enrolled.

B. RECOMMENDATION:

DENY the request for current use taxation "Open space" classification because the Public Benefit Rating is 0 points. If approved, the participating land would be subject to the following requirements:

**Requirements for Property Enrolled in the
Public Benefit Rating System Current Use Taxation Program**

1. Compliance with these requirements is necessary to continue to receive the tax benefits from the King County Public Benefit Rating System (PBRS) current use taxation program for the property enrolled in the program (Property). Failure to abide by these requirements can result in removal of current use designation and subject the property owner (Owner) to the penalty, tax, and interest provisions of RCW 84.34 and assessment at true and fair value. The King County Department of Assessments (DoA) and the Water and Land Resources Division, Director's Office, Agriculture, Forestry and Incentives Unit (AFI) or its successor may re-evaluate the Property to determine whether removal of the open space designation is appropriate. Removal shall follow the process in RCW 84.34.108.
2. Revisions to these requirements may only occur upon mutual written approval of the Owner and granting authority. These conditions shall apply so long as the Property retains its open space designation. If a conservation easement acceptable to and approved by King County is granted by the Owner or the Owner's successors in interest to the Department of Natural Resources and Parks, King County or a grantee approved by King County, these requirements may be superseded by the terms of such easement, upon written approval by King County.

3. The open space classification for this Property will continue so long as it meets the open space purposes for which it was initially approved. Classification as open space will be removed upon a determination by King County that the Property no longer meets the open space purposes for which it was initially approved. A change in circumstances which diminishes the extent of public benefit from that approved by the King County Council in the open space taxation agreement will be cause for removal of the current use assessment classification. It is the Owner's responsibility to notify the DoA and the AFI Unit or its successor of a change in circumstance with regard to the Property.
4. When a portion of the open space Property is withdrawn or removed from the program, the AFI Unit or its successor and the DoA shall re-evaluate the remaining Property to determine whether it may continue to qualify under the program. If the remaining portion meets the criteria for priority resources, it may continue under current use taxation.
5. Except as provided for in sections 6 and 7 below, no alteration of the open space land or resources shall occur without prior approval by the King County Rural and Regional Services Section or its successor. **Any unapproved alteration may constitute a departure from an approved open space use and be deemed a change of use, and subject the Property to the additional tax, interest, and penalty provisions of RCW 84.34.080.** "Alteration" means any human-induced action that adversely impacts the existing condition of the open space Property or resources including but not limited to the following: *(Walking, horseback riding, passive recreation or actions taken in conjunction with a resource restoration plan, or other similar approved activities are permitted.)*
 - a. erecting structures;
 - b. grading;
 - c. filling;
 - d. dredging;
 - e. channelizing;
 - f. modifying land or hydrology for surface water management purposes;
 - g. cutting, pruning, limbing or topping, clearing, planting, introducing, relocating or removing vegetation, however, selective cutting may be permitted for firewood;
 - h. applying herbicides or pesticides or any hazardous or toxic substance;
 - i. discharging pollutants excepting stormwater;
 - j. paving, construction, application of gravel;
 - k. storing of equipment, household supplies, play equipment, or compost;
 - l. engaging in any other activity that adversely impacts the existing vegetation, hydrology, wildlife, wildlife habitat, or other open space resources.
6. Notwithstanding the provisions of Section 5 trees posing a hazard to structures or major roads may be removed. Any trees removed must be replaced.
7. If an area of the Property becomes or has become infested with noxious weeds, the Owner may be required to submit a control and enhancement plan to the AFI Unit or its successor in order to remove such weeds. If an area of the Property becomes or has become invaded by non-native species, the Owner may be required to submit, or may voluntarily submit, an enhancement plan to the AFI Unit or its successor, in order to replace such species with native species or other appropriate vegetation.

8. There shall be no motorized vehicle driving or parking allowed on the open space Property.
9. Grazing of livestock is prohibited on the open space Property.
10. An owner of property enrolled in the program may be required to submit a monitoring report on an annual or less frequent basis as requested by program staff. This report must include a brief description of how the property still qualifies for each awarded resource category. It must also include photographs from established points on the property and any observations by the owner. The owner must submit this report to the department by email or by other mutually agreed upon method. An environmental consultant need not prepare this report.
11. Enrollment in PBRS *does not* exempt the Owner from obtaining any required permit or approval for activity or use on the Property.

TRANSMITTED to the parties listed hereafter:

Office of the King County Hearing Examiner
Happy Valley Eastside Inc, Mark Clark, President, applicant
Debra Clark, King County Department of Assessments

An aerial photograph showing a large area of dense green forest. A yellow rectangular boundary box is drawn around a central portion of the forest. Within this box, the parcel number '2225069073' is printed in yellow. The surrounding area includes several dark, irregularly shaped ponds or swamps, some of which are partially covered by trees. In the bottom right corner, a residential development with several houses and roads is visible. The image is overlaid with a grid of thin white lines, likely representing property boundaries.

2225069073

2019 aerial photo

IMAGE_Ortho2019KGR.A1