

### **III. Existing Development**

#### *Neighborhood Centers*

Traditionally a neighborhood center is a park or green or distinctive intersection in the middle of the neighborhood. For purposes of this project and to recognize their role as providers of daily needs destinations, the Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers are included in this category.

In the East Renton area the Briarwood Shopping Center north of SE 128<sup>th</sup> Street is the only identified neighborhood center. Although outside the demonstration area and designated Rural, this center is the closest provider of daily needs destinations (see [Appendix A](#)) for the demonstration area. Numerous properties within the demonstration area south of SE 128<sup>th</sup> Street are within a quarter-mile walking distance of this commercial center, a distance generally considered the maximum at which a person while chose to walk. Development on these properties is low density at an average of less than 2 units per acre. This density does not include the King County owned wetland properties across from the Briarwood Shopping Center but does include some private properties that have a portion of the wetland on them.

The impact on walkability to the neighborhood center is reduced by its decentralized location outside of the project area and the wetland. For properties within a quarter-mile walking distance, the center provides nine daily needs destinations in addition to other commercial services.

#### *Residential*

All residential property within the demonstration area has been built as single-family housing. There are no multi-family developments in the demonstration area or the immediate surrounding area. In total there are 1,218 single-family homes on 1,214 parcels. These include four accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and 38 mobile homes.

Of the 1,176 non-mobile, primary residences, approximately 70% were built between 1960 and 1980 – with nearly half built during the 1960s alone. These residences were typically developed at ‘rural’ standards with large lots and no sidewalks or streetlights. No alleys were implemented so property access is from the street, with most residences having garages parallel to or projecting before the front of the house. The residences built between 1960 and 1980 use slightly over 50% of the 591 acres in the demonstration area currently being used for residences.

Newer residential developments in the area have been built at more urban standards. These developments tend to have smaller lots and sidewalks. Property access remains from the street, with the increased density resulting in more curb cuts. Many of these developments are located within the Liberty Annexation area. Although outside the demonstration area, these residences have both visual and traffic impacts on the demonstration area, which surrounds it on three sides. Within the demonstration area itself residences built since 2000 comprise about 2% of the primary, non-mobile home residences.

All of the residential properties have front yards that separate the home from the street. For some properties, these front yards can be large expanses of mowed grass. Others homes are located behind a sizable stand of mature trees and may be isolated from

the street. A few active horse ranches also remain within the demonstration area, providing visual open space and a link to the historic rural character.

As the majority of houses were built during a 20-year period, many of residences in the demonstration area have a fair amount of consistency in terms of size, placement on the property, and on-site vegetation. This is especially true in regards to the prevalence of mature trees on these properties. Unlike newer developments, these houses have more variation in façade, color and landscaping. By contrast most of the newer developments feature a narrower range of house styles, larger buildings on smaller lots, and limited mature vegetation.

Overall the as-built density on properties developed for residential use is approximately 2 units per acre. This figure does not include vacant and non-residential use properties. Considering all residentially-zoned properties, including those that are vacant or alternatively used such as the schools, parks or the Renton Game and Fish Club, the as-built density is 1.4 units per acre. As the majority of the demonstration area is currently zoned R-4, redevelopment could potentially add a considerable number of residences to the demonstration area. The extent of this redevelopment will depend on the replacement of the existing housing stock, nearly half of which will be over 50-years old within the next decade.

The areas with higher levels of density tend to be near SE 128<sup>th</sup> Street in the northwest corner of the demonstration area and south of the Liberty Annexation area. The lowest levels of density are in the eastern half of the demonstration area.

Table 3: Year Primary Residence Was Built

<b>Year Primary Residence Was Built in East Renton FBC Demonstration Area</b>			
Year	Number of Properties	Percent of Total Properties	Total Area in Acres
Before 1920	1	<1%	0.3
1920-1929	3	<1%	4.9
1930-1939	6	1%	7.1
1940-1949	16	1%	19.4
1950-1959	110	9%	73.3
1960-1969	537	46%	202.0
1970-1979	284	24%	110.6
1980-1989	113	10%	79.4
1990-1999	81	7%	43.2
after 1999	25	2%	20.4
Total	1176	100%	560.6

*Mixed-use*

No mixed-use centers are located within or near the demonstration area.

*Commercial*

Within the demonstration area the only commercial uses are the Alpine Nursery, the Renton Game and Fish Club, and Highland Auto. The latter is located on the Commercial Outside of Center portion of the split-designated parcel near the Briarwood

Shopping Center. The Alpine Nursery and Renton Game and Fish Club are on properties with a Residential land use.

Directly north of the demonstration area is the Briarwood Rural Neighborhood Commercial Center. It is also the only commercial area that is within a quarter-mile walking distance from properties within the demonstration area. Within the Briarwood Shopping Center are a grocery store, restaurants, bar, gym, ice rink, espresso stands, personal care service providers, and convenience store and gas station<sup>1</sup>.

*Civic*<sup>2</sup>

Within the demonstration area are three schools that are part of the Issaquah School District: Briarwood Elementary (opened in 1963), Maywood Middle School (1969, renovated in 1993), and Liberty High School (1977). Although the majority of the demonstration area is located within the Issaquah School district, properties on and west of 157<sup>th</sup> Place SE are within the Renton School District.

Two churches, Lord of Life Lutheran and East Renton Community, are located within the demonstration area. Both are located in the northwest corner of the demonstration area. A fire station is also located in this area along 156<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE near SE 128<sup>th</sup> Street.

Table 4: Existing Development

<b>Existing Development for East Renton FBC Demonstration Area</b>			
Category	Sites	Acres	Percent
Civic	Briarwood Elementary School, Maywood Middle School, Liberty High School, East Renton Community Church, Lord of Life Lutheran Church, Fire Station	76.0	9%
Commercial	Alpine Nursery, Renton Game and Fish Club, Highland Auto	46.3	6%
Mixed-Use		0	0%
Park/open space	Maplewood Heights Park, Cedar River to Lake Sammamish Trail site	33.4	4%
Single family		582.2	69%
Vacant/Other		100.1	12%
Total		838	100%

*Vacant or Undeveloped Properties*

Using the Assessor’s data report and GIS, it was determined that approximately 100 acres in the demonstration area are either vacant or not been developed for residential, commercial or civic use. Excluding King County-owned properties such as those containing the wetland near SE 128<sup>th</sup> Street and stormwater retention ponds, the

<sup>1</sup> Mapquest, field surveys, and residential input were used to determine location and number of commercial destinations. Dependent upon accuracy and changes since information was collected; the actual number of commercial destinations may vary.

<sup>2</sup> For purposes of this analysis, civic uses are those which generally service the community without a commercial interest. These uses can be government, religious or community operated.

total acreage of these vacant properties is approximately 75 acres. This is less than 10% of the total demonstration area.

The average size of these properties is less than one acre, limiting the ability for new large developments within the demonstration area. One possible exception would be a change in use of the Renton Fish and Game Club property. For purposes of this project, this 38 acre parcel is not categorized vacant and not included in the vacant acreage totals. Designated Rural Residential, this property could result in over 200 homes if Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) credits are used, dependent upon any potential site limitations and development requirements. The Alpine Nursery property is also zoned for residential use, but a use conversion of this 5.6 acre property would have less of an impact.

Table 5: Number of Parcels by Size and Use

Number of Parcels by Size and Use for the East Renton FBC Demonstration Area						
Area in Acres	Civic	Commercial	Park/Open Space	Single-family	Vacant	Demonstration Area
0 - 1	6			1149	175	1330
1 - 2	1			37	11	49
2 - 3	1			14	3	18
3 - 4				7	1	8
4 - 5	1		3	5		9
5 - 6		1				1
7 - 8						
8 - 9				1	1	2
9 - 10	1			1		2
10 - 20	1		1		1	3
20 and above	1	1				2
Total	12	2	4	1214	192	1424

*Lot Coverage*

Consistent with the rural standards of development and larger lot size, all of the developments within the demonstration area have building-to-lot coverage of less than 40%.

*Buildable Lands*

According to the [2007 Buildable Lands Report](#), the East Renton Potential Annexation Area (PAA) had 74.1 acres of vacant developable parcels and 201.5 acres of redevelopable parcels. This equates into a buildable total capacity of 276 acres. As these figures include the Liberty Annexation area, the current acres within each category would be slightly lower.

The capacity for the entire PAA, including the Liberty Annexation Area and lands outside the demonstration area, is 1,300 housing units over and above the 2,800 units currently present. Of this capacity, nearly 25% is from vacant parcels (313 units) and 75% (990 units) from redevelopment. Redevelopable parcels include those that can be subdivided or are underutilized.

The total area of the PAA remaining on the plateau after the Liberty Annexation is 1,280 acres. The entire East Renton PAA is 1,807 acres. The East Renton Form Based Code demonstration area is 979 acres, or approximately three-quarters of the plateau and half of the entire PAA.

### *Residents' Concerns*

Based on input with a small task force group of residents and a community survey conducted by Community Alliance to Reach out and Engage (CARE), the developments that have been built as a result of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) credits have been disliked by many of the residents in and near the demonstration area. These residents see these developments as inconsistent with the character of the neighborhood. Residents have expressed a sense of inability to control the type of development that occurs within their neighborhood. That many of these newer developments have been on larger, tree-covered properties only adds to the sense of physical disconnect as the site is cleared and then developed.

Beyond the density and tree loss associated with these developments, the more urbanized nature of them is also considered in conflict to the neighborhood's character. Unlike the large-lot, rural development of the majority of the houses in the demonstration area, newer developments have been built at a more urban standard with larger houses on smaller lots. The similarity in house style and color also contrasts with the wider variations seen in the established housing in the area. Again, the lack of tree retention or buffering further accentuates these differences.

Aside from the visual impacts caused by these new developments, residents have experienced increased problems with surface water runoff. As a sloped area on a plateau above two valleys, water runoff is a major concern for the residents. The continued clearing of mature trees and greater use of large stormwater retention ponds are likely to cause continued conflict with the established residents, especially those who are or may be potentially impacted by any additional runoff onto their properties.

Although residents have not expressed a strong desire to establish commercial or mixed-use areas within the demonstration area, the lack of commercial options has been mentioned. Suggestions to increase walkable destinations focused on 'neighborhood-scale' destinations, such as cafés or personal service providers.

Generally the residents expressed a preference to maintain the traditional, rural suburban character of the demonstration area.