



## City of Langley

### MEMORANDUM

**To:** Langley City Council  
**From:** Meredith Penny, Director of Community Planning  
**Re:** Options to adjust the Potential Growth Area overlay within the Joint Planning Area  
**Meeting Date:** October 7, 2024

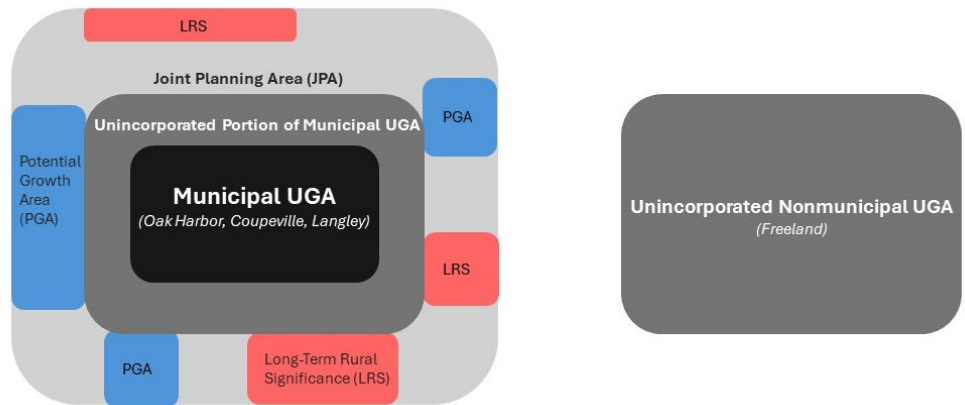
As part of the ongoing Comprehensive Plan update, staff are recommending the City consider coordinating with Island County on changes to the Joint Planning Area Potential Growth Area overlay to better protect natural resources and plan for growth in areas of existing and planned infrastructure.

#### Background Information

##### Urban Growth Areas

Urban Growth Areas are defined as areas where “urban growth shall be encouraged and outside of which growth can occur only if it is not urban in nature.” Urban Growth Areas can be incorporated or unincorporated. They can be associated with a municipality or not. In Island County, the cities of Oak Harbor, Coupeville, and Langley are considered Urban Growth Areas. Freeland is an unincorporated Urban Growth Area, not associated with a municipality, and is under Island County jurisdiction and zoning. Oak Harbor and Langley have portions of their Urban Growth Areas which are unincorporated, meaning these areas are also under Island County jurisdiction and subject to Island County zoning. Municipalities can only annex areas that fall within their Urban Growth Areas. Once annexed, such areas would then fall under City jurisdiction and zoning. Urban Growth Areas must be adequately sized to accommodate urban population and employment growth projected for the 20-year planning period and cannot be larger than necessary to accommodate this population.

During the 2016 update of the Island County Comprehensive Plan, the County conducted an evaluation of the capacity of its Urban Growth Areas. The evaluation determined that Langley’s Urban Growth Area was oversized and required a boundary adjustment to reduce the size. Four parcels outside the city limits were included within the proposed boundary “due to existing water and sewer availability to the parcels.”



##### Joint Planning Areas

Joint Planning Areas are areas immediately outside of, and adjacent to, Municipal Urban Growth Areas. Joint Planning Areas are jointly designated by the county and municipalities to reserve areas which may be necessary for future urban growth and to protect land which has been identified as resource land of long-term commercial significance, land extensively constrained with critical areas, lands with important scenic or conservation values, key entrance roads, and

areas of historical significance. Broadly, such areas are intended to provide an opportunity for long-term planning beyond the normal twenty-year planning horizon.

### **Joint Planning Area Overlays**

Within the Joint Planning Areas, the County and municipalities collaboratively produce a long-term conceptual plan. This is done under a process outlined in the Countywide Planning Policies, by applying two broad overlay designations within the Joint Planning Area: Potential Growth Areas and areas of Long-Term Rural Significance. These designations do not need to be applied to all land within the Joint Planning Area, land may be left undesignated; however, sufficient quantities of both Potential Growth Area and Long-Term Rural Significance land should be designated to guide and control future development.

### **Criteria for Designating Potential Growth Areas**

The Joint Planning Area overlay designation of Potential Growth Area should be considered for lands which are:

- i. Already characterized by urban development,
- ii. Served by urban services, particularly sanitary sewer, or
- iii. Determined by the municipality and the county to be the most logical and cost-effective location to accommodate future Urban Growth Area expansions.

Land should not be assigned a Joint Planning Area overlay designation of Potential Growth Area if such land meets the criteria for a Long-Term Rural Significance designation.

### **Criteria for Designating Areas of Long-Term Rural Significance**

The Joint Planning Area overlay designation of Long-Term Rural Significance should be considered for lands which are:

- i. Extensively constrained by critical areas, flood hazards, or tsunami hazards, except when this land could be used to fulfill open space requirements;
- ii. Determined by the county and/or municipality to have long-term cultural, scenic or environmental benefits, except when this land could be used to fulfill open space requirements;
- iii. Resource lands of long-term commercial significance;
- iv. Classified as forest lands or farm and agricultural lands and with property valuation at current use classification under RCW 84.34.020(2) or RCW 84.33.035; or
- v. Within or in close proximity to Accident Potential Zones, and areas highly impacted by aircraft noise identified in Air Installations Compatible Use Zones program noise contour maps.

### **The Issue with the Current Joint Planning Area Designations**

The City of Langley currently has approximately 144 acres of its Joint Planning Area designated as Potential Growth Area. Approximately 105 acres of the land in the Potential Growth Area overlay (73 percent) is in either the agriculture or forestry current use tax program. This conflicts with the criteria in item iv. above, which states that such lands should be designated Long-Term Rural Significance. Additionally, during the current comprehensive plan update process, City staff have heard from the community their desire to preserve the forested greenbelt surrounding the city. Lastly, the Whidbey Camano Land Trust has also been pursuing conservation efforts in this area but, considering the proximity to the city limits, they are seeking the City's support in such efforts. The current Joint Planning Area overlay map conveys a message about the City's goals which conflicts with their conservation efforts. With the current adopted Comprehensive Plan pointing towards growth in this area, the Whidbey Camano Land Trust will not pursue conversation efforts here.

### **Staff Recommendation**

City staff recommend changing the location of the Potential Growth Area overlay to support natural resource preservation and to designate a new Potential Growth Area that is more compatible with potential urban development. Staff have outlined three options for a new Potential Growth Area overlay in the attached maps. The proposed areas align with planned future water system improvements and the Langley Infrastructure Project sewer expansion.

### **Recommendation from Commissions**

City staff presented the attached three options to the PAB at their September 4<sup>th</sup> meeting. The PAB was unable to agree on whether the Potential Growth Area overlay should be moved, and if so, where to. To support PAB's further deliberation, City staff brought the three proposed options to the Public Works Advisory Commission, the Parks and Open Space Commission, and the Climate Crisis Action Commission. Each of the three commissions independently and

unanimously voted in favor of recommending option 1. Staff presented the recommendations from the three other commissions to PAB at their October 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting. The PAB voted to recommend City Council pursue option 1.

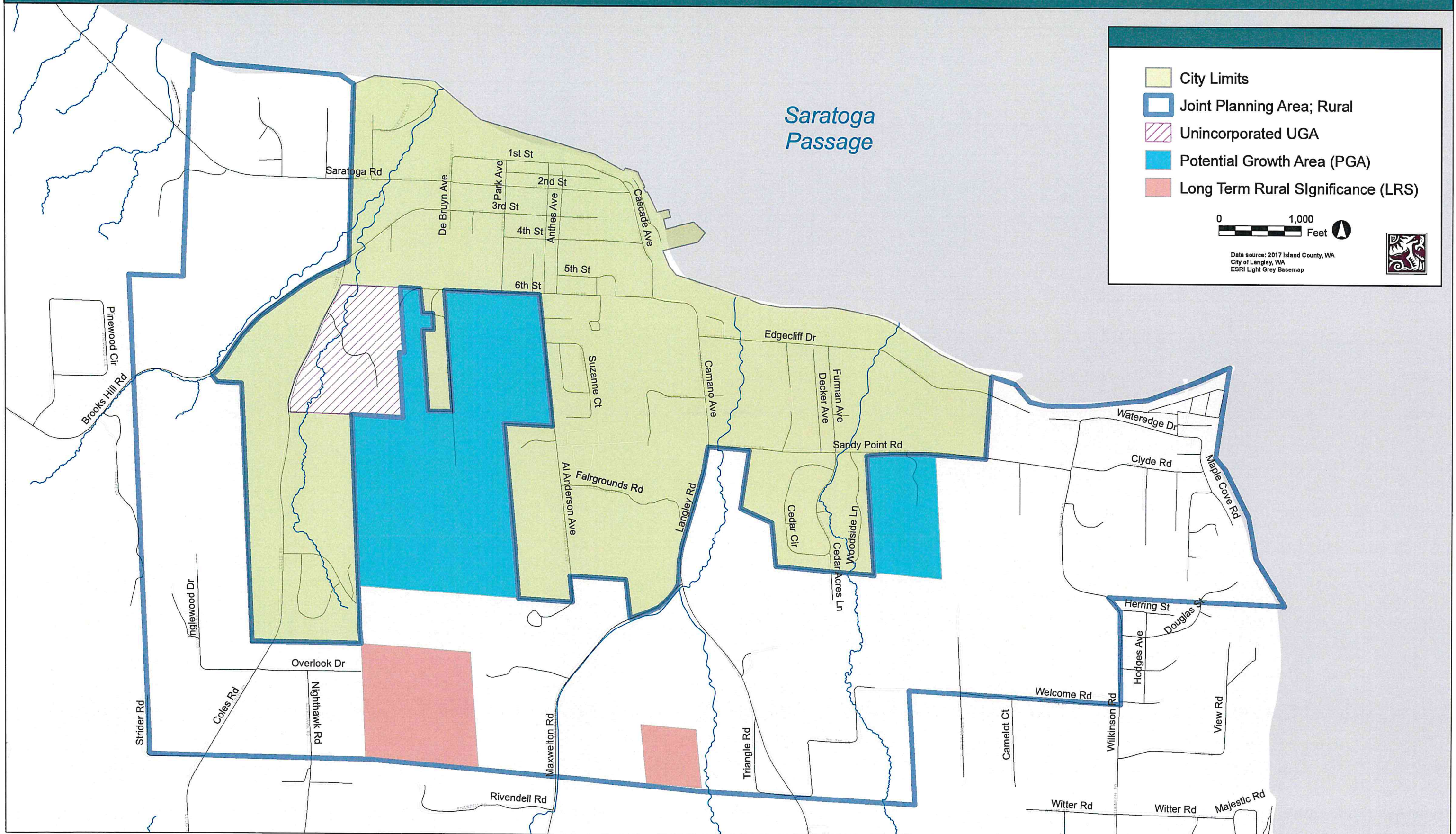
### Next Steps

If approved, staff will draft a letter to Island County requesting their consideration of the overlay changes. This letter will be brought to City Council's October 21<sup>st</sup> meeting for approval.

### Attachments:

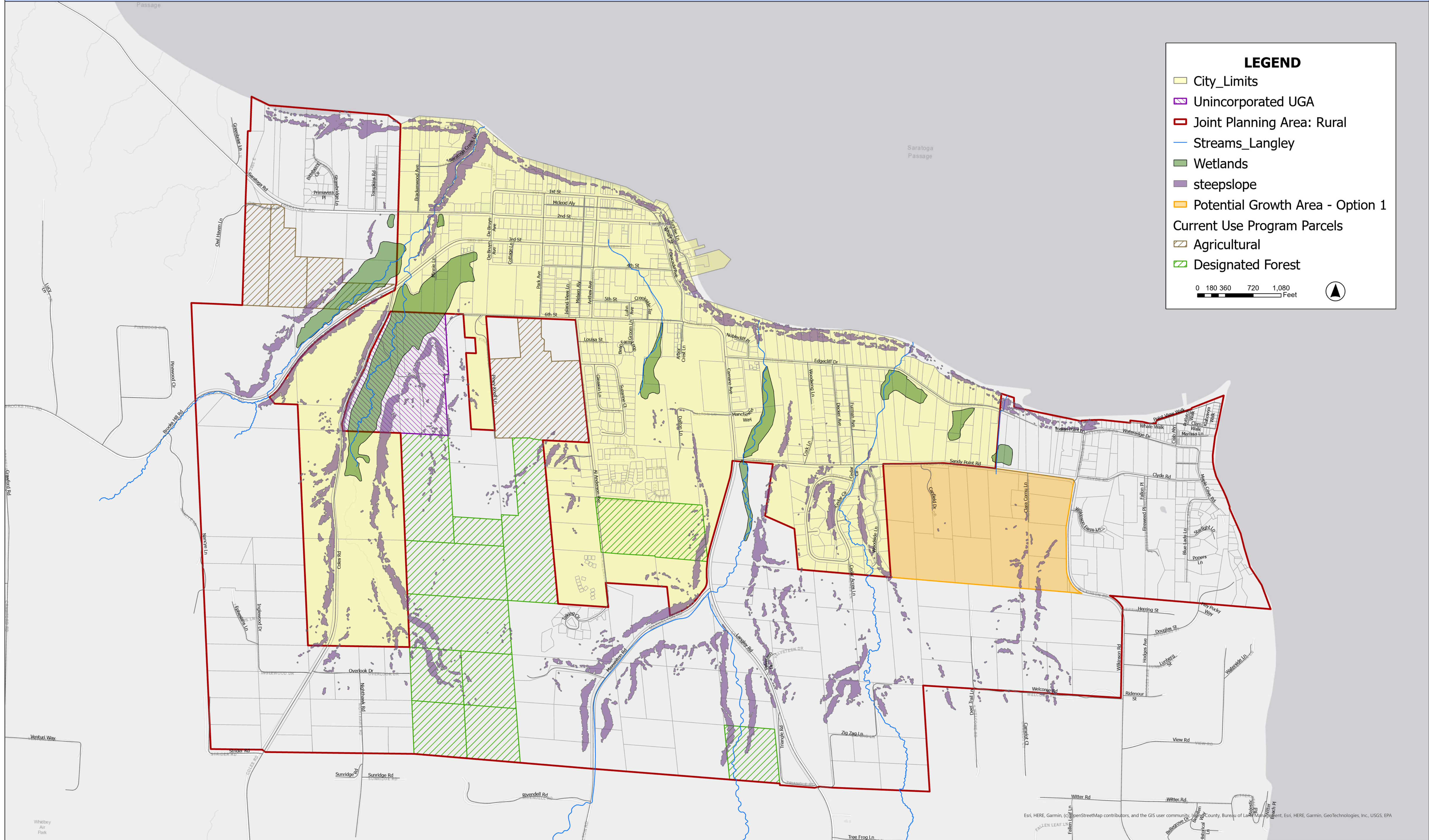
- A. Current Joint Planning Area Map from 2018 Comprehensive Plan
- B. Options for Potential Growth Area overlay changes (1-3)

Figure LU-2  
Langley Joint Planning Area (JPA) and Overlays



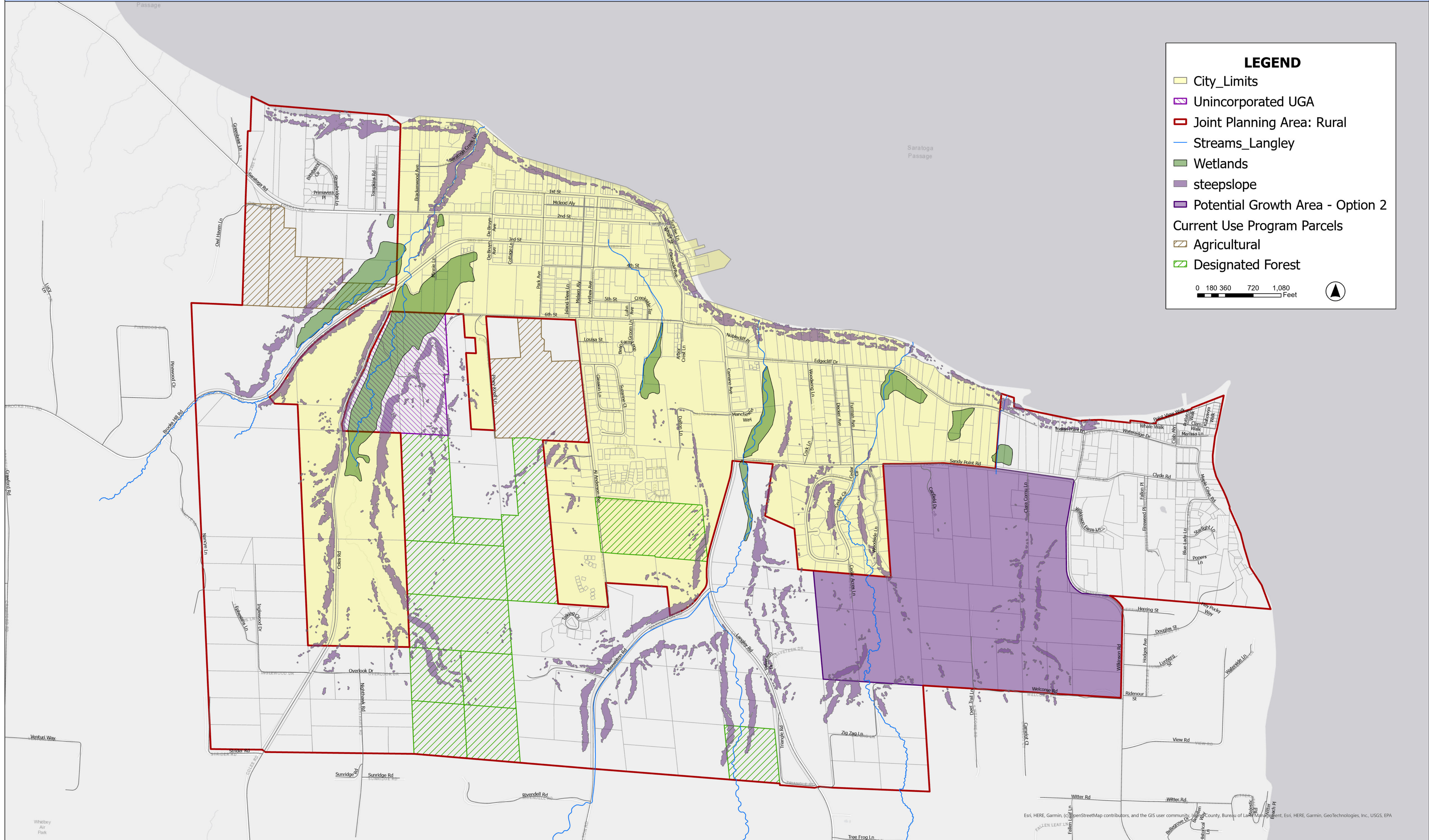


# Langley Potential Growth Area - Option 1





# Langley Potential Growth Area - Option 2



**LEGEND**

- City\_Limits
- Unincorporated UGA
- Joint Planning Area: Rural
- Streams\_Langley
- Wetlands
- stepslope
- Potential Growth Area - Option 2
- Current Use Program Parcels
- Agricultural
- Designated Forest

0 180 360 720 1,080 Feet

Esri, HERE, Garmin, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community (c) Langley County, Bureau of Land Management, Esri, HERE, Garmin, GeoTechnologies, Inc., USGS, EPA



# Langley Potential Growth Area - Option 3

