

City of Bremerton

Grant Representative: Bill Zachman, Environmental Protection Agency

Grant Close-out

30 June 2014

Comprehensive Watershed Plan for Sustainable Development and Restoration of the Gorst Creek Watershed

The City of Bremerton was provided with an Environmental Protection Agency grant for the Gorst Creek watershed. The largely undeveloped Gorst Creek watershed feeds the headwaters of Sinclair Inlet in the Puget Sound. In 2009, the City of Bremerton and Kitsap County Health Department partnered to obtain funding to sewer the Urban Growth Area (UGA) to address water quality issues and sewers were installed. Local real estate professionals indicate sewers will make large tracts of previously-developed land commercially viable for redevelopment. The Gorst UGA's location at the intersection of Highways 3 and 16 make it a natural to fill the current housing and commercial shortfall in Kitsap County. There were no code provisions for Low Impact (LID) or Green Development in the area. The projects goals were to:

- Evaluate and classify existing habitat in the Gorst Creek Watershed;
- Develop a comprehensive plan and implement regulations to protect the intact ecosystem processes, structures and functions; and
- Create a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to correct existing deficiencies.

The City of Bremerton and Kitsap County, in partnership with other state, federal, and tribal agencies, has developed a 20-year plan for the future of Gorst. The purpose of this cooperative planning effort has been to develop a land use plan that is based on the ecological values and functions of the Gorst Creek Watershed in southeast Kitsap County. The preparation of a plan of this nature required significant up-front environmental analysis and careful consideration of the effects that land use decisions would have on the environment.

There were three major documents that have been prepared for Gorst which relate to the task set forth in the grant, and though they can be read separately, each document relies on the information contained in the others:

Volume 1. Gorst Creek Watershed Characterization & Framework Plan Based on the results of a Watershed Characterization Study prepared in 2012 and amended in 2013 studying water flow and habitat, the Gorst Creek Watershed Characterization & Framework Plan guides water quality, habitat, and land use plans and activities across

the approximately 6,570-acre watershed. The Gorst Creek Watershed Characterization & Framework Plan provides a common set of goals, policies, and best management practices intended for adoption and implementation by the City of Bremerton, which governs nearly two-thirds of the watershed in its city limits, and by Kitsap County, which governs unincorporated lands comprising over one-third of the watershed. This plan was developed by the task described in Task 1, Watershed Characterization.

Volume 2. Gorst Planned Action Environmental Impact Statement The Gorst Planned Action Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is an informational document that provides the City of Bremerton, Kitsap County, members of the public, and other agencies with environmental information, an evaluation of alternatives, and potential mitigation measures to minimize environmental impacts. The Gorst EIS analyzes the *No Action Alternative (Alternative 1)*, e.g. continuation of the City's and County's current Comprehensive Plans and development regulations applicable to the Gorst Creek Watershed and Gorst Urban Growth Area (UGA). The EIS also addresses two *Action Alternatives (Alternatives 2 and 3)* and a *Preferred Alternative* that vary land use patterns, particularly in the Gorst UGA; these alternatives consider increasing residential development and enhancing commercial development while promoting environmental restoration and protection. The Gorst EIS allows the City of Bremerton and Kitsap County to consider designating a planned action for some or all of the Gorst UGA. Designating a planned action streamlines environmental review for development proposals consistent with EIS mitigation measures that are adopted in a planned action ordinance. This plan was developed by the task described in Task 3, Planned Action EIS.

Volume 3. Gorst Subarea Plan While the Gorst Creek Watershed Characterization & Framework Plan referred to above analyzed the entire 6,570-acre Gorst Creek Watershed, this Subarea Plan is intended only to address the future vision and development regulations for the Gorst UGA, which is approximately 335 acres in size. The UGA is currently under the jurisdiction of Kitsap County and assigned to the City of Bremerton as an annexation area, and this Subarea Plan will be adopted jointly by both jurisdictions. This Gorst Subarea Plan is a comprehensive 20-year plan that establishes the general patterns for future land use, transportation and other infrastructure needs in Gorst. The purpose of this plan is to provide greater detail, guidance and predictability to future development within the Gorst UGA, while also protecting the environment. This document also details the public involvement process and includes the Capital

Improvement Plan. This plan was developed by the task described in specifically Task 2 Land Use, but the Subarea Plan also includes details on Task 4, Stormwater planning, 5, Capital Improvement Plan and 6, Public Involvement.

This process provided a lot of challenges, especially one close to home for us, with continuous staff changes till the last push. Though this grant was granted to the City in 2010, the staff changes kept placing this grant in a limbo, while the replacements were figured out and staff continuing to be cut (budget cuts due to recession). Finally we got a team involved who cleared their schedule in 2013 and they pushed till the final project was adopted that December (great success). If we could have hindsight on this, there will be little that we could change. Challenges also included working on the SUSTAIN model. This was the last item on the grant that we had to produce. We were excited to discuss and include the results of the SUSTAIN model, but things kept not being sufficient. Finally EPA and our consultants got a product that was satisfying and so 5 months after the initial adoption, we can finally close that chapter as we had a placeholder in our code and now we can replace with actually report. If we could do this again, we would have pushed harder on this to be completed earlier in the project (we didn't quite realize the difficulty it was going to be to get this report correct and had to issue our consultants more funds to complete this portion on the project).

Though the City and the County are very satisfied with our products from this grant, to plan for future development within this watershed, this didn't completely fix all the issues with the watershed that we know need future consideration. The main constraint is the traffic throughout the area. This is a bottleneck traffic for 2 hours a day which makes this area why displeasing to most and provides pollution to the area from the idling cars. WSDOT has provided funding to also look into this issue, but the City/County need to push for a solution. In addition, in the long-term approach, this process clearly identified that upland development is directly affecting the valley that feeds out to the inlet and we have required development to provide 100% stormwater retention, but since this area gets flooding, we provided incentives for the development to plan for 100+% stormwater to help management other development's runoff. This concept is very important about upland development (which this could also be tied into the Oso slide which all Planners are trying to plan different for upland development). Outreach to the local jurisdictions will be important in this measures and the City has already presented this planning effort in the Planning Association of Washington in Lynwood, and are planning on presenting to the American Planning Association – Washington Chapter Annual Conference (in October in 2014).

In addition, the City performed a video that explained some key points of the process and contacted agencies, and citizens to inform them that this can be seen on the Gorst website (www.gorstwatershed.com). Though the City identified issues with this proposal, it has clearly provided an environmental benefit from the previous plans.

This project will hopefully encourage jurisdictions to plan different than the typical: first and foremost plan for where development. This planning effort required us to look and create goals and policies for the environment around it (the Watershed Characterization), and then specifically look at the developed areas. There were significant benefits from planning with that approach. An additional outcome that will have a lasting effect within Kitsap County is that this planning effort required the City to work with County closely on this grant as majority of this area is within the County jurisdiction, but it is allocated to the City of Bremerton for future annexation. The ripple down effect is this enforced a great working relation with the County that will help future projects. This will also help out the local citizens as the goal was to have a similar code so when the City does annex, it would be seamless for the applicant regarding what they can do with their site.

This project will have a benefit to the community and the local jurisdictions that hopefully learn from our process. This grant provided a great resource for an area that is prime for redevelopment but could have significant impacts on the environment.