



Planning & Development Services

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Memorandum

Additional Analysis of CaRD Development on Fidalgo Island

To: Planning Commission, Public
From: Kirk Johnson, Senior Planner, AICP
Re: Additional Information on CaRDs on Fidalgo Island
Date: March 28, 2017

This memo contains additional information regarding Conservation and Reserve Development (CaRD) land divisions on Fidalgo Island. It is presented to help the public and Planning Commission consider the potential effects of proposal P-12 which is part of the 2017 Comprehensive Plan Amendment docket.

P-12 would redesignate all Rural Reserve land on Fidalgo Island to a new South Fidalgo Rural Residential (SF-RR) designation and zone; remove a number of non-residential special uses that can be applied for in the zone; and eliminate the ability to do CaRD land divisions in SF-RR. For additional discussion of the proposal, see the Department's [Staff Report on 2017 Docket of Comprehensive Plan, Map, and Code Amendments](#) (February 28, 2017), on the 2017 Comprehensive Plan Amendment website (www.skagitcounty.net/2017CPA).

CaRDs are a type of land division that allows the clustering of residential lots on small parcels (a maximum of 1 acre in size) in exchange for placing the remainder of the land in an open space designation. For additional background information about CaRDs, see [pages 56-57](#) in the Comprehensive Plan's Land Use Element.

In some zones, including Rural Reserve, CaRD land divisions are eligible for what is called a "density bonus." The maximum density allowed through standard land divisions in Rural Reserve is one residence per 10 acres; however, CaRD land divisions are eligible for a density of 2 residences per 10 acres, or effectively 1 residence per five acres for parcels 10 acres or larger. The following table shows how the CaRD density bonus works in Rural Reserve.

Example Residential Development Rights for Standard Land Divisions and CaRDs in Rural Reserve

Parcel Size	Standard Land Division	CaRD Land Division	Comments
5 acres	Land division not possible	CaRD not possible	1 development right if a certified lot of record
10 acres	1 development right	2 development rights: 1 standard; 1 density bonus	Max. 1 acre lot size Lots must be clustered
15+ acres	1 development right (20 acres required for 2 nd standard development right)	3 development rights: 1 standard; 2 density bonuses	Additional development right available for each 5 acre increment over 10 acres
20 acres	2 development rights	4 development rights: two standard, and two density bonuses	
25 acres	2 development rights (30 acres required for 3 rd standard dev. right)	5 development rights: two standard, 3 density bonuses	

The Department’s February 28, 2017, staff report included information and analysis of CaRD land divisions on Fidalgo Island between 2005 and 2015. This memo includes additional information spanning the entire time that CaRDs have been an option: 1999 through 2016. The memo also calculates how much land zoned Rural Reserve on Fidalgo Island is theoretically eligible for future CaRD development.

CaRDs on Fidalgo Island

According to the Department’s permit data base, the County approved three CaRD land divisions in Rural Reserve on Fidalgo Island between 1999 and 2016.¹ Those CaRDs resulted in eight development lots—four of them through density bonuses—and two open space lots. A total of 37 acres were placed in open space designation through those three CaRDs. One of the CaRDs has the potential to create one additional residential development lot, which would also be the result of a density bonus. These CaRDs are shown in [Map 1](#).

Some Fidalgo residents have asked how many additional CaRD land divisions could be done in Rural Reserve on South Fidalgo Island, and how many new residential lots could be created.

¹ There have been two CaRD land divisions in the Rural Intermediate zone on Fidalgo Island, resulting in 8 development lots and 19.7 acres of designated open space. No density bonus is provided for CaRDs in Rural Intermediate but they are still a land division option in that zone. As in Rural Reserve and other zones, the CaRD ordinance allows the clustering of smaller lots (maximum 1 acre) in exchange for placing the remainder of the land in an open space designation;. The maximum number of development lots is the same through a CaRD as through a standard land division in Rural Intermediate. CaRDs in Rural Intermediate are not discussed further in this memo because proposal P-12 would not make any changes to CaRDs in that zone.

With the help of the GIS Department, Planning & Development Services (“the Department”) identified all lands on Fidalgo Island where a landowner owns 10 or more contiguous acres in Rural Reserve. The Department then removed from consideration Rural Reserve parcels that are within ¼ mile of the Mineral Resource Overlay (MRO), as land within ¼ mile of the MRO cannot be developed at a density of greater than 1 residence per 10 acres. (In other words, no CaRD density bonus is available.) Tracts of land eligible for additional CaRD development in Rural Reserve are shown in red in [Map 2](#).

Following are the results of that analysis:

CaRD Development Potential in Fidalgo Island Rural Reserve

Tracts* in Rural Reserve 10 acres or larger and > ¼ mile from MRO	100
Acreage of these tracts	2,279
Existing residences	71
Potential new residential lots at standard density (1 residence/10 acres)	130
Potential new residential lots through CaRD density bonuses	231

***Meaning one or more contiguous parcels of land with the same ownership**

The above analysis provides a potential theoretical maximum for CaRD development with density bonuses in Rural Reserve on Fidalgo Island. However, a number of caveats are warranted:

- This is a broad-level analysis intended to generate a reasonable estimate of CaRD development potential. It does not and cannot substitute for the detailed analysis required for an actual CaRD land division proposal.
- The identification and mapping of parcels that are or are not eligible for CaRD development with density bonuses may not be accurate for any particular parcel; that can only be determined through detailed review of an actual CaRD application.
- The same is true for the overall calculation of potential developments rights through standard or CaRD land divisions.
- Finally, the analysis only seeks to provide a reasonable estimate of the theoretical maximum development potential. It is not a projection or a forecast for any particular period of time. Not every landowner who has the potential to do a CaRD will chose to do so or to utilize all of their potential development rights. The fact that there have only been three CaRD land divisions in Rural Reserve on Fidalgo Island in the last 17 years indicates CaRD development has not to date been a frequent occurrence.