

# Planning Commission Public Hearing



Community Development • 125 NW Chehalis Avenue, Chehalis, WA 98532 • Phone: (360) 740-1146

## STAFF REPORT

## MASTER PLANNED RESORT DESIGNATIONS

**Date:** April 18, 2025  
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### SUMMARY

RCW 36.70A.360 authorizes counties to permit master planned resorts, which constitute urban growth outside of urban growth areas. A master planned resort means a self-contained and fully integrated planned unit development, in a setting of significant natural amenities, with primary focus on destination resort facilities consisting of short-term visitor accommodations associated with a range of developed on-site indoor or outdoor recreational facilities.

All services (e.g., water, sewer, utilities, emergency) must be provided on-site and be limited to serving only the master planned resort. Services cannot be extended beyond the master planned resort. The services may be provided through a joint service agreement by a municipality or special purpose district, provided the master planned resort bears all costs associated with service extensions.

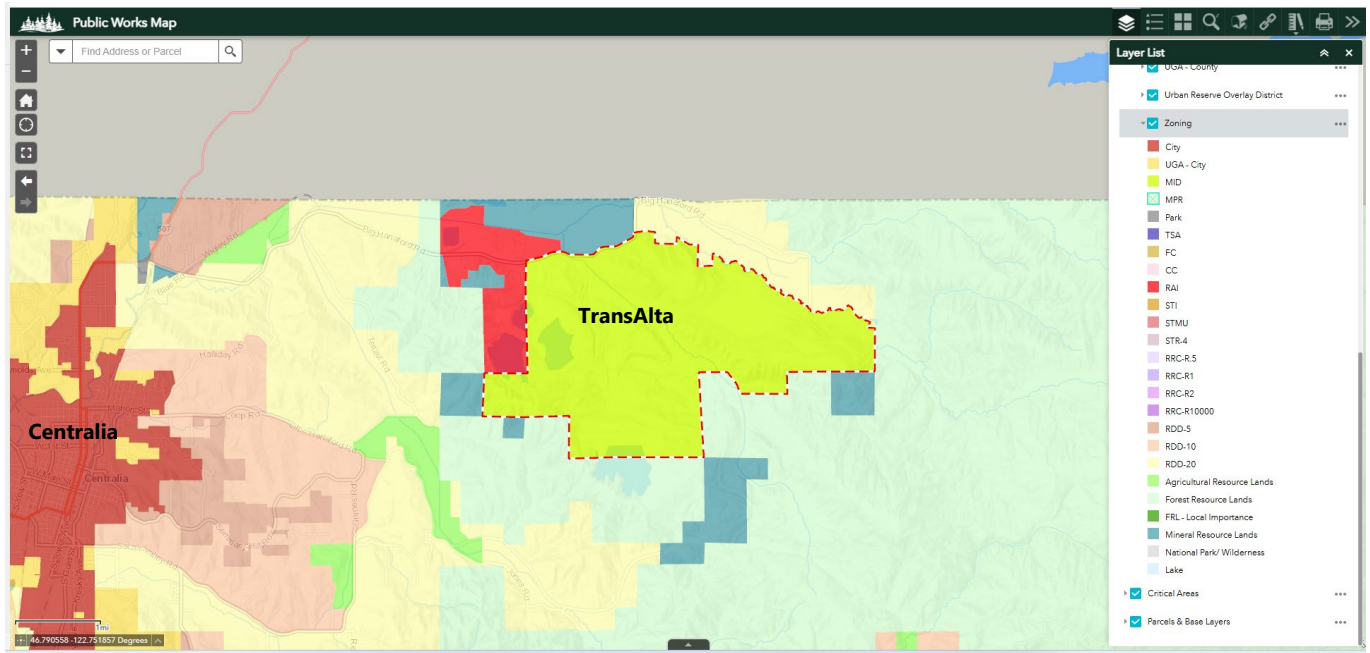
The reason why staff have proposed two master planned resorts in Lewis County is to proactively designate appropriate locations for recreational resort-style development, rather than allow property owners to propose rezoning properties to allow master planned resorts. Staff have determined that portions of the reclaimed TransAlta mine near Centralia and property located off Thompson Road in East Lewis County are appropriate locations for master planned resorts.

The benefit of designating master planned resorts is that all contiguous parcels of land under that zoning must jointly apply for a one Binding Site Plan, which ensures a coordinated development proposal with appropriate roads, traffic control, water, sewer, etc. In addition, master planned resorts are required to have screening and buffering around the full outer edge to limit any off-site visual and noise impacts. Without the MPR designation, each parcel could do its own development proposal, based on the zoning designations, with no Binding Site Plan.

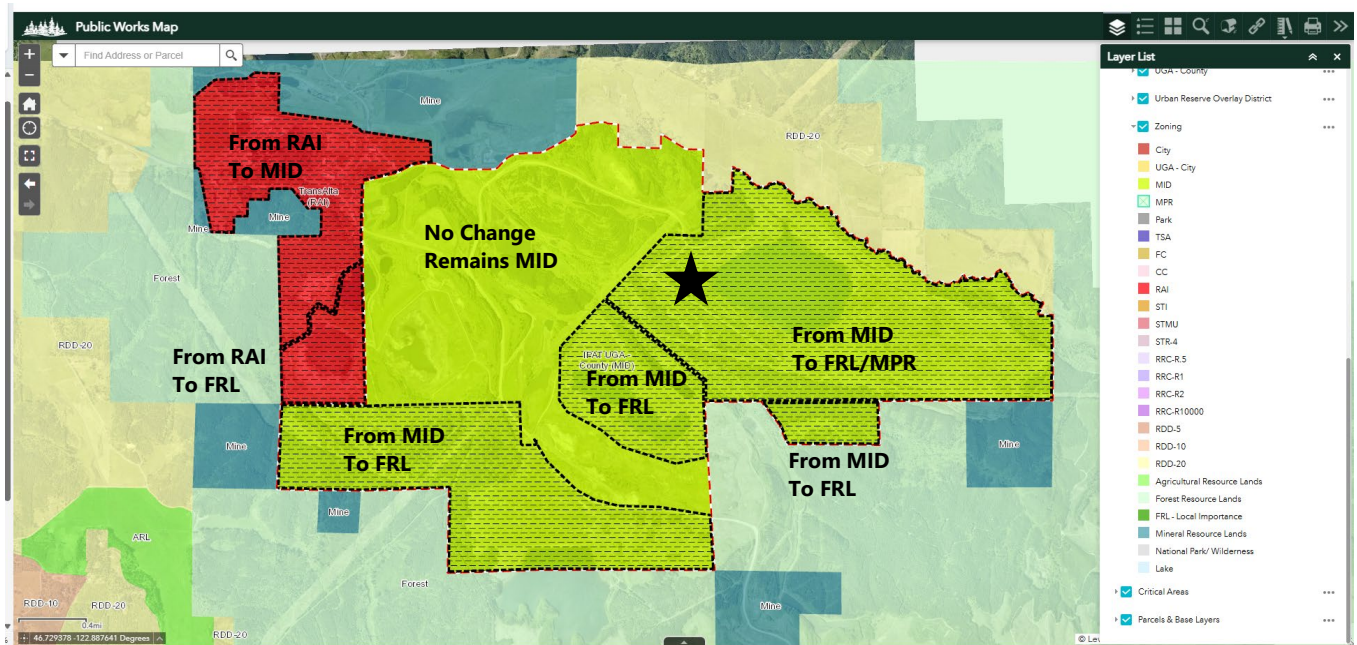
For example, the Rural Development District (RDD-10) zone allows hotels, motels, RV parks and campgrounds, restaurants, event centers, shops such as camping supply, convenience grocery stores, and golf courses. Each owner of an individual RDD-10 parcel can apply for these uses, provided on-site services (e.g., well and septic) can be met. Cumulative impacts on transportation infrastructure and services are not adequately captured through individual site development. If those parcels are all zoned MPR, then a joint Binding Site Plan will require coordinated development, and cumulative impacts can be addressed.

## TRANSALTA

Below, Map 1 is the existing zoning and Map 2 is the proposed zoning.



Map 1 – TransAlta Existing Zoning Designations



Map 2 – TransAlta Proposed Zoning Designations

The TransAlta coal mine is in the process of decommissioning. Much of the land is reclaimed as forest, but there are portions of the property that will remain available for energy production or industrial uses. This memo does not address the proposed Regional Area Industrial (RAI) or Major Industrial District (MID) zoning changes; this memo **only** addresses the land that is proposed for Forest Resource Land (FRL) with a Master Planned Resort (MPR) overlay, denoted with a star in Map 2. TransAlta is a partner in this rezoning proposal.

Why a master planned resort? There is a large, approximately 200-acre, manmade, fish-bearing lake that will remain. (Note – many of the ponds will be drained as part of decommissioning.) The land around the lake has been replanted with trees and shrubs. This provides a unique opportunity to create a new, 1,400-acre, outdoor recreation destination. This is envisioned as a combination of a small marina, RV park, event center, golf course and trails in a forest setting. There is an elevation change from the powerline corridor down to the lake that provides a natural visual barrier between the master planned resort and the energy production or industrial uses envisioned for the MID.

Because the **MPR is an overlay zone**, the underlying FRL zone also applies. That means forestry uses are allowed, including harvesting. At this time TransAlta owns the property and could decide how to proceed with forestry or development as a master planned resort. They could also sell the property for either purpose.

## **THOMPSON ROAD**

East Lewis County is an international recreation destination with Mt Rainier National Park, White Pass Ski Resort and the Goat Rocks Wilderness. Nestled between these outdoor attractions is Packwood. Packwood has seen a significant increase in tourism with an estimated 1 million visitors per year (source: Packwood Visitor Center). Planning has been underway for the past 4 years to help manage the growth and impacts associated with tourism.

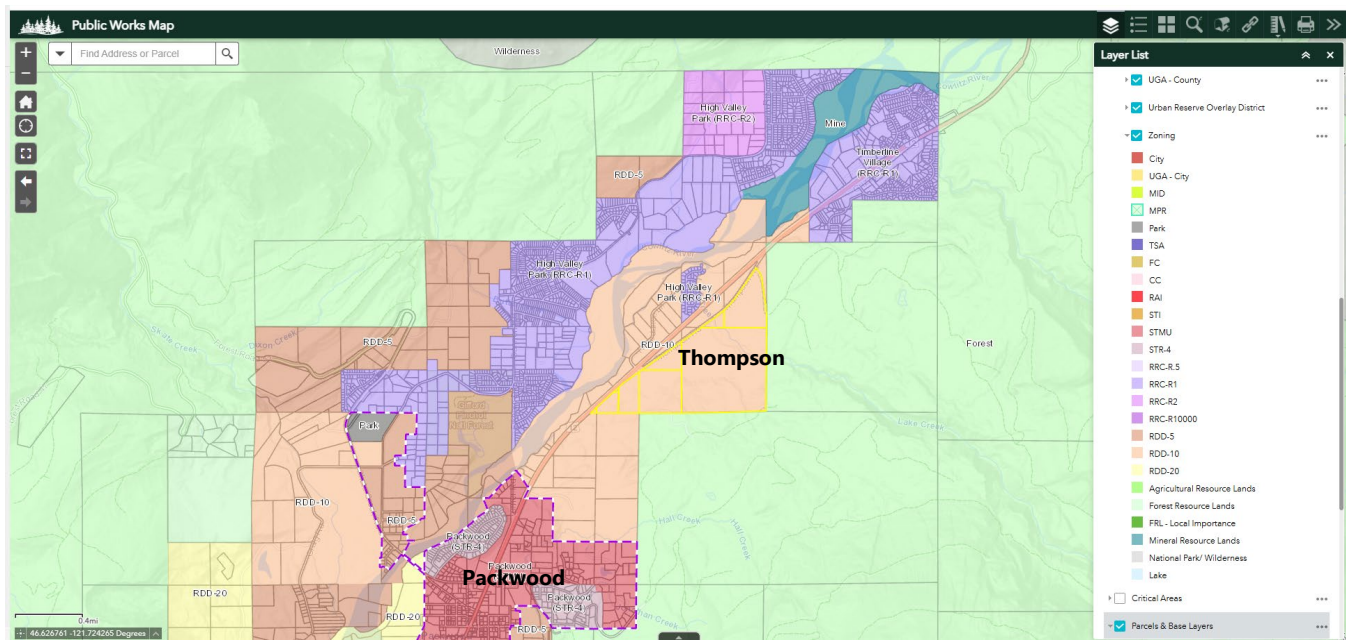
Map 3 shows the existing zoning and Map 4 shows the proposed zoning for parcels of land located north of Packwood on Thompson Road. Currently the properties are under two owners and the zoning is RDD-10. The same uses allowed by the MPR overlay zone are already allowed by the RDD-10 zone; however, each parcel can develop individually and there is no requirement for coordinated capital facilities (e.g., water, sewer, transportation) or services. The MPR overlay zone would prohibit lodging accommodations, that would otherwise be allowed by RDD-10, unless approved through a Binding Site Plan. That would ensure coordinated development, capital facilities and services. It would also ensure that the cumulative transportation and services impacts from the development are addressed.

Another requirement of master plan resorts is that 40% of the land must remain in open space. This can be a combination of unpaved areas including maintained forest, hiking trails, or golf course. This open space requirement does not apply to the underlying RDD-10 zone.

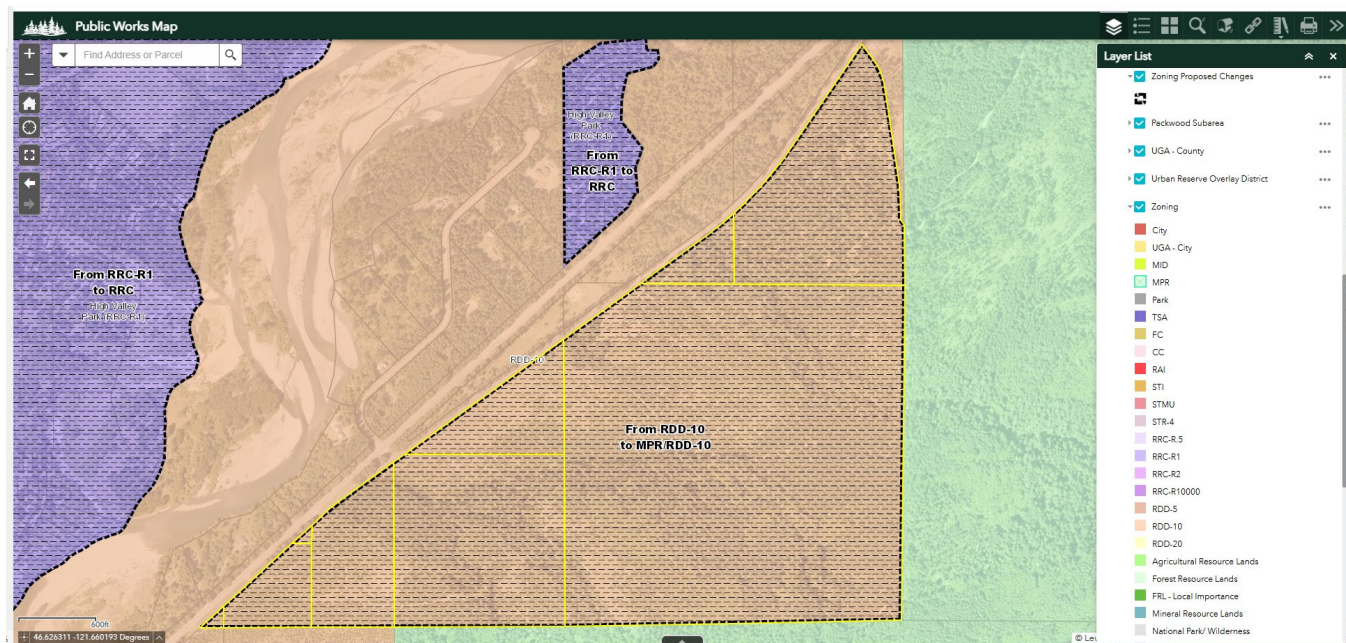
The reason this location was chosen is because:

1. In combination, the parcels of land equal 270 contiguous acres, in close proximity to Mt Rainier, White Pass Ski Resort and Goat Rocks Wilderness.
2. Thompson Road would be the primary access to the master planned resort and is a side road to Highway 12, providing additional opportunities for traffic control.
3. Lewis County Fire District 10 is located in Packwood. The Binding Site Plan process will require that the master planned resort bears the costs associated with providing an appropriate level of services.
4. Packwood has many amenities that can support a master planned resort including a grocery store, automotive shop and doctor's office.





Map 3 – Thompson Road Existing Zoning Designations



Map 4 – Thompson Road Proposed Zoning Designations

## NEXT STEPS

The Planning Commission will continue to take testimony on this proposal, as well as the rest of the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and zoning proposals, through May 7, 2025. The Commissioners may close the public record and deliberate on May 7 or continue the hearing through May 13 to deliberate. More information on the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update can be found here <https://lewiscountywa.gov/departments/community-development/rezones/comprehensive-plan-and-development-regulation-amendments/comprehensive-plan-periodic-update/>