RESPONSE TO COMMENTS REGARDING THE SPRINGTREE RANCH PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN MAP AMENDMENT INCLUDING REVISIONS TO MAP AMENDMENT

September 30, 2024 1100

This document addresses the comments received by Kittitas County Community
Development Services concerning the Springtree Ranch Planned Unit Development
non-project request, which was submitted as part of the annual Kittitas County
Comprehensive Plan Update Process. This document includes provisions to the
proposed map amendment.

As a non-project action, this request does not involve the finalization or approval of specific development layouts or plans for the rezone of the property from Agriculture 5 to Planned Unit Development. This will occur at the time that the Final Development Plan is submitted and approved by the county. However, the general development concept has been outlined, including the existing locations of homes, the outdoor arena, rebuilding of the indoor arena, the shop building, the barn, pasture lands, irrigation systems, and horse paddocks. These elements illustrate the current land uses on the property.

County staff have conducted a thorough review of the proposal and provided feedback to the applicant. Additionally, the application for the proposed Planned Unit Development was submitted to state agencies for their comments and made available to local residents and the general public for input. The comment period has since closed, and all feedback has been compiled and submitted to the applicant.

In response to the comments received, the applicant has revised the original application, reducing its size, density and potential impacts on adjoining properties to the west. Furthermore, the location of the planned replacement indoor arena has been adjusted.

This document outlines the revisions to the original application for the proposed Planned Unit Development and includes specific responses to the majority of comments received from Kittitas County, state agencies, local residents, and the general public.

Attached on the following pages is our response to the comments including a Table of Contents, discussion of relevant issues, revised site plan, and exhibits concerning the proposed rezone to a Planned Unit Development zone.

Springtree Ranch LLC

Pat Deneen

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Applicant Statement Regarding Response to Comments

This statement provides an overview of the comments received and the responses give regarding the Springtree Ranch Planned Unit Development (PUD) non-project request, submitted as part of the annual Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan Update Process. The applicant appreciates the feedback and has revised the proposal based on the input received.

Project Background

The Springtree Ranch, established in the 1983 (see Section 15 for deed) is located on Nelson Siding Road in Kittitas County. The ranch has a long history of equestrian activities, including breeding, raising, training, selling, and boarding Quarter Horses. The property also features an outdoor arena, an indoor arena, and other amenities essential for equestrian activities.

The winter storm of 2021/2022 caused significant damage to the ranch's infrastructure, including the indoor arena and hay barn. As a result, the ranch is in the process of replacing the damaged facilities. During this period of rebuilding the equestrian activities have continued.

Right to Farm KCC 17.74 & RCW 7.48 Protections for Springtree Ranch

This section outlines the robust legal protections for established equestrian operations in Kittitas County under both Washington State law (RCW 7.48) and Kittitas County Code (KCC 17.74), affirming that agricultural activities, including equine operations, are safeguarded from nuisance claims and encroaching development. The Kittitas County Right to Farm Ordinance further reinforces these protections by explicitly covering existing agricultural activities, including equestrian uses, and requiring disclosure to new property owners about potential inconveniences. The proposed Planned Unit Development is designed to uphold these rights while accommodating growth, ensuring

that the ranch's operations can continue without undue interference from surrounding residential development.

Revisions to the Proposed PUD

In response to the comments, the applicant has made the following revisions to the proposed PUD:

<u>Project Size Reduction</u>: The proposed PUD area has been reduced from 27.27 acres to 22.27 acres. The boundaries of the proposed Planned Unit Development have been adjusted so that a 5-acre section adjacent to the western property line will remain under Agricultural 5 zoning to provide a buffer between the development and existing residential properties.

Reduction in Density Increase: The applicant originally proposed to increase the density by four units through the transfer of development rights. However, after reviewing the comments received from Kittitas County regarding the proposed map amendment, the applicant has decided not to increase the density at this time. Therefore, the density in this proposed map amendment will remain consistent with the underlying Agricultural 5 (AG 5) zoning, which allows for a maximum density of four units.

<u>Total Density Proposed</u>: The proposed rezone to Planned Unit Development (PUD) has been reduced to a size of 22.27 acres. The underlying zoning classification is Agriculture 5 (Ag-5), which allows for one unit per five acres, permitting a maximum density of 4 parcels under current zoning regulations.

The 22.27-acre site consists of two existing parcels: 1942 Nelson Siding Road (Parcel Number 376334) and 1890 Nelson Siding Road (Parcel Number 396334), along with a portion of Parcel 386334 located at 2020 Nelson Siding Road. Parcel 386334 will be adjusted to include 5 acres and will remain zoned AG 5.

Addressing Traffic Concerns: To mitigate traffic congestion on Nelson Siding Road on Sunday afternoons during summer, the applicant has agreed not to hold any events or gatherings during the mid-summer on Sundays until the traffic issues are resolved.

Response to Specific Comments

The applicant has carefully reviewed all comments and has provided detailed responses in the attached document. A summary of these responses are found below:

<u>Cultural Resource Survey:</u> While a cultural resource survey has been requested, the property's long history of farming and logging, with no recorded evidence of cultural resources, suggests it is unnecessary. However, an Unintentional Disturbance Plan will be established before any construction.

<u>Forest Practices Act:</u> The applicant will consult with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) if any future construction necessitates logging that requires a Forest Practices Act (FPA) Application.

<u>Water Usage:</u> The applicant has access to water resources through the Big Water Bank and the Reecer Creek Water Bank. Any additional water needs will be addressed through the acquisition of necessary water rights or mitigation plans, following Kittitas County Code Chapters 13.35.020 and 13.35.027.

Access and Engineering Permits: While not required at this stage, the applicant will apply for necessary access and grading permits during the Final Development Plan process.

<u>Transportation Concurrency:</u> The project is exempt from the Transportation Impact Analysis (TIA) and concurrency evaluation requirements as it is projected to generate only 18.88 additional daily trips.

Equestrian Activities and Noise Concerns: Existing equestrian activities are protected under the Kittitas County Right to Farm Code 17.7410. The applicant has a longstanding history of conducting equestrian events, and the proposed PUD includes measures to mitigate any potential noise or traffic impacts.

<u>Derelict House and Vehicles:</u> The applicant will address the condition of the house on Parcel 376334 and ensure compliance with county requirements regarding derelict vehicles and trash.

Revision of Zoning Plans: The applicant clarifies that this proposal is a separate rezoning process from a previously approved Cluster Subdivision, which the applicant chose not to move forward with.

Addressing Concerns about Rural Character

The applicant understands concerns about preserving the rural character of the Nelson Siding area. The proposed PUD aims to balance residential development with the preservation of agricultural land and activities.

<u>Preservation of Open Space:</u> The PUD includes provisions for usable open spaces, ensuring the land is not solely dedicated to residential use.

Historical Context: Springtree Ranch has been an equestrian farm for over 40 years, predating all of the surrounding adjoining residential development. The PUD seeks to protect these existing agricultural activities as the area continues to evolve and urbanize.

<u>Compliance with Regulations:</u> The PUD adheres to the density regulations outlined in the Kittitas County Code, ensuring that the development remains consistent with the rural character of the area.

Conclusion

The applicant believes the revised PUD addresses the comments received by expressing the importance of balancing the need for residential development while preserving the area's agricultural heritage. The applicant is committed to working with the community to ensure the project is a success.

Section 1: History of the Springtree Ranch/Farm and the Nelson Siding Area in General

A) SPRINGTREE RANCH

Establishment and Early Years

The Springtree Ranch is situated on Nelson Siding Road in Kittitas
County, Washington, an area renowned for its rich agricultural heritage
and breathtaking landscapes. Established in 1983, the ranch was
envisioned and developed as a multi-use property that would
accommodate a variety of equestrian activities, agricultural operations,
and land for residential use. Since its inception, Springtree Ranch has
focused on the breeding, raising, training, selling, and boarding of Quarter
Horses. Additionally, the Ranch provides instruction, and it hosts equine
orientated events and gatherings at its facilities. The Ranch is the home of
its owners' family, now in its fourth generation. Before the establishment of
Springtree Ranch, the property was used for agricultural purposes,
primarily for growing grasses, and was also involved in forestry practices,
including logging activities.

Equestrian Activities: Springtree Ranch is dedicated to breeding high-quality Quarter Horses, recognized for their versatility in riding, roping, and a variety of equestrian events. The ranch is also known for producing 4-H horses that are utilized by county 4-H participants. Currently, the ranch has one stallion for breeding, along with several mares. From time to time, some of the Springtree mares are sent to external facilities for breeding to improve their bloodlines.

Horse Training: The ranch not only breeds horses but also raises and trains them. The training primarily focuses on arena and trail riding for

those interested in recreational equestrian activities. Occasionally, the ranch also trains Quarter Horses that are being prepared for competition.

<u>Boarding:</u> The owners board all of their own horses on the ranch's property while also offering both short-term and long-term boarding options for outside horses and their owners. During their stay, owners of these outside horses have the opportunity to participate in training and can access the various areas and trails within the ranch's boundaries.

Facility Development: The ranch facilities feature an outdoor arena, an indoor arena (see section B Winter Storm below for further information on the indoor arena), round pen, parking, stables, pasture lands, and irrigation. These amenities are vital for breeding horses and for conducting training sessions and events throughout the year. Springtree Ranch has also significantly invested in infrastructure improvements to enhance overall operations and elevate the experience for both horses and riders.

Ongoing Operations: Currently, the ranch is focused on maintaining its operations while exploring opportunities for further development through the Planned Unit Development rezone action which will allow for additional residential and agricultural uses. The ranch's commitment to quality care for the horses and responsible land management continues to be a guiding principle through its evolution.

<u>Community Engagement:</u> Over the years, Springtree Ranch has remained active in the local community, participating in events such as 4-H competitions and educational programs that promote equestrian skills and agricultural awareness.

B) WINTER STORM OF 2021/2022:

On December 24, 2021, snowfall began in the upper Kittitas County area, particularly impacting the region between Cle Elum and Easton. On that day, Easton reported 32 inches of snow on the ground, with an additional 3.5 inches accumulating throughout the day.

Over the next 14 days, the storm intensified, leading to substantial snowfall in the Nelson Siding Road area. By January 7, 2022, the storm had deposited a total of five to seven feet of snow depending on location, resulting in considerable damage to many structures.

At Springtree Ranch, the indoor arena collapsed under the weight of the heavy snow. The hay barn which included stalls for animals, which had been standing since 1910 and was in good condition, also succumbed to the conditions and fell. The outdoor shelters, paddocks connected to the hay barn, and surrounding fencing were significantly damaged and collapsed as well.

Additionally, the remaining stables, which housed various horses and equipment, sustained damage. The apartment located above the stables and the home at 1942 Nelson Siding Road were also impacted by the storm.

Overall, the snowstorm caused significant disruption and damage to properties along Nelson Siding Road, leading to considerable challenges for recovery and repairs in the aftermath.

The Springtree Ranch is in process of replacing the various facilities that were lost or damaged from the storm. A new shop building has been constructed. Most of the damaged buildings have been removed.

C) NELSON SIDING ROAD AREA

The Nelson Siding Road area has a rich history characterized by agricultural development and community growth. In the mid-1800s, the region attracted settlers drawn by its fertile soil and favorable climate. Situated on the east side of the Cascade Mountains, this area benefits from warm summer weather, which, combined with irrigation, supports productive farming. Several irrigation sources, including the Yakima River, Big Creek, Little Creek, and various springs at the base of the southern foothills, have historically facilitated agricultural use. Shallow groundwater levels allowed farmers to establish wells easily, further enhancing agricultural productivity.

As settlers established their farm homes, the construction of the Kittitas Reclamation District (KRD) in the early 1900s greatly improved irrigation infrastructure. KRD provided supplemental irrigation water, essential for cultivating crops and supporting the growing farming community, including equestrian activities that emerged later.

Documentation from the era of initial settlement is limited; however, a review of a 1954 aerial photograph indicates that at that time, this area was primarily comprised of farms and ranches, with fewer than 20 homesteads present. The Nelson Siding area, situated just east of the Cascade Mountains' rain shadow, is characterized by warm conditions during the spring, summer, and fall months, which further encouraged agricultural development.

Over the years, improvements to highways and the population growth in the Puget Sound basin created pressure to subdivide many of the original homesteads into smaller farming operations. By the late 1900s, much of the agricultural land began to be transformed into residential use. This process accelerated during the early 21st century. Now only a few farming and ranching operations remain in the area, with the Nelson Siding Area now comprising more then 600 residential parcels. This has eliminated most of the ongoing agriculture facilities and operations.

Among these remaining operations is Springtree Ranch, which provides a farm/ranch with an equestrian focus even as the surrounding land use has changed. The proposed Planned Unit Development (PUD) aims to create 5 small parcels that will provide homesites for the owner's growing family and others, along with one larger parcel to continue the ranching operations. Three of these home sites currently have residential units constructed upon them including one residential unit at 1890 Nelson Siding Road, one residential Unit at 1942 Nelson Siding Road, and one unit at 2022 Nelson Siding Road.

The completion of the I-90 freeway has enhanced access to the Puget Sound basin, making the area appealing for commuters to urban centers like Seattle and Bellevue. This easy access has led to increased land demand, rising property values, and increasing taxes. This process accelerated during the years of the COVID pandemic.

The Springtree Ranch Planned Unit Development is designed to maintain the ranch's long-standing agricultural and equestrian activities while accommodating the needs of the owner's growing family. This approach ensures the continued use of the ranch and farmland in a manner that aligns with the evolving community landscape of the Nelson Siding area.

Urbanization of the Nelson Siding Area in aerial photos

In Section 15 of this document, we have included several attachments that illustrate the gradual residential conversion and its impact on the farming community that originally settled the Nelson Siding Road area. Below is a list of these attachments, along with descriptions detailing how continued residential development affects the Nelson Siding area.

1954 Aerial Photo of the Nelson Siding Area
1993 Aerial Photo of the Nelson Siding Area
1993 Aerial Photo of the Springtree Ranch
2022 Aerial Photo of the Nelson Siding Area showing the growth since
Comparison of 1954 to 2022

Section 2: Right To Farm KCC 17.74 & RCW 7.48 Protections for The Springtree Ranch

Protecting Kittitas County's Agricultural Heritage

The ordinances outlined in "Chapter 17-74" from the Kittitas County Code and "RCW 7.48 Right to Farm" from the Revised Code of Washington provide a framework for protecting agricultural activities, including equestrian activities, from the pressures of encroaching residential development. These laws recognize that living near working agricultural operations, such as equestrian ranches, may involve certain sights, sounds, and smells that are inherent to these operations.

A key protection offered by these codes is the **presumption of reasonableness for agricultural activities**. This means that activities considered normal and customary in agriculture are not considered nuisances, even if they generate some level of noise, odor, dust, or other potential inconveniences. The Kittitas County Code specifically includes **"equine activities"** within its definition of protected agricultural activities. For example, the operation of machinery, the movement of livestock, training of animals, and the application of fertilizers are all part and parcel of running an equestrian ranch and are afforded protection under these codes.

Importantly, these protections are not limited to traditional farming practices. The codes recognize that agriculture is a dynamic industry that must adapt to new technologies and consumer demands. For instance, an equestrian ranch might incorporate new

training methods, host different types of equestrian events, or diversify into related agricultural activities like raising hay or other feed crops.

The underlying intent of these ordinances is to **preserve the agricultural character** of Kittitas County, recognizing its historical, economic, and cultural significance to the region. The codes aim to ensure that equestrian ranches, as an integral part of the agricultural landscape, can continue to operate without the threats that could force them to cease operations or relocate.

The codes also address the need for transparency and understanding between agricultural operations and their non-agricultural neighbors. Through mandatory disclosures, potential buyers of properties near agricultural lands, including those near equestrian ranches, are, or should be by the sellers, informed upfront about the potential realities of living near such operations. They are to be made aware that activities like the early morning sounds of tractors, the presence of manure, or the occasional dust cloud kicked up by horses are all part of the normal rhythms of an active agricultural area. This informed decision-making process is designed to minimize conflicts that could arise from a misunderstanding or lack of awareness about the realities of living near an equestrian ranch.

In essence, these ordinances create a legal buffer for equestrian ranches and other agricultural operations in Kittitas County, acknowledging their importance to the community's identity and providing a framework that balances their needs with those of residential development. By clearly defining agricultural activities, including those related to equestrian operations these codes offer a degree of legal security that allows equestrian ranches to operate and thrive.

Section 3: Discussion Of Revisions to The Springtree Ranch Planned Unit Development

The Applicant has proactively revised the proposed Planned Unit Development (PUD) and eliminated the associated transfer of development rights to enhance the project's compatibility with the surrounding community. These adjustments are intended to decrease the overall size, density, and perceived impact of the development, creating a more favorable outcome for all stakeholders involved.

<u>Project Size:</u> The proposed PUD has been reduced from 27.27 acres to 22.27 acres. In doing so, the Applicant will retain a 5-acre section adjacent to the western property line, maintaining it under Agricultural 5 zoning. This portion of the ranch will contain a Ag 5 buffer which will provide a transition area between the planned unit development and existing residential properties to the west, ensuring that the needs of neighboring property owners are respected.

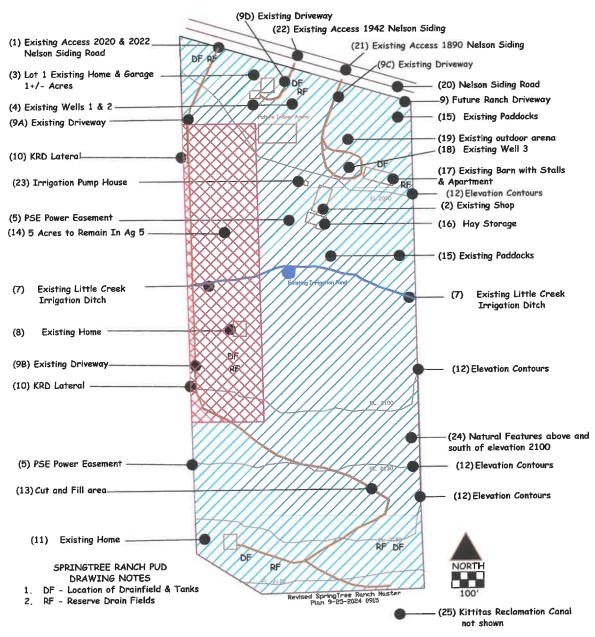
<u>Transfer of Development Rights:</u> Initially, the Applicant proposed to increase the density of the property by four units through the transfer of development rights as allowed by KCC 17.13. However, in response to feedback from agencies and the general public, the Applicant has made the decision to not move forward, at this time, with this portion of the proposal.

<u>Transportation Considerations</u>: In recognition of the traffic challenges on Interstate 90 that lead to increased use of county roads, including Nelson Siding Road on Sunday afternoons during the summer months, the Applicant has agreed not to hold any events or gatherings on Sundays until the traffic issues are resolved. This proactive approach underscores the Applicant's dedication to mitigating potential traffic impacts and ensuring a smoother experience for all residents.

These revisions reflect a positive commitment to responsible development that enhances the community while continuing to support the important agricultural heritage of the area.

REVISED SPRINGTREE RANCH MASTER PLAN - SITE PLAN

SEPTEMBER 25, 2024 0910



Section 5: Response to comments from the Colville Tribe

The Colville Tribe has requested a cultural resource survey for the property to assess potential disturbances. However, this property has been actively farmed and logged for over 100 years, with no recorded evidence of any cultural resources being uncovered during that time. The proposed rezone will primarily maintain the current agricultural and logging uses, suggesting that a cultural resource survey is unnecessary. Prior to any construction, we will establish an Unintentional Disturbance Plan to address any unforeseen issues that may arise.

Section 6: Response to comments from DAHP

The Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation requested additional information and provided no comments. This property has been actively farmed and logged for over 100 years, with no recorded evidence of any cultural resources being uncovered during that time. The proposed rezone will primarily maintain the current agricultural and logging uses, suggesting that a cultural resource survey is unnecessary. Prior to any construction, we will establish an Unintentional Disturbance Plan to address any unforeseen issues that may arise.

Section 7: Response to comments from DNR

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has requested that if any future construction necessitates logging that requires a Forest Practices Act (FPA) Application, the applicant should meet with the local forester from DNR to discuss the application process for the FPA. We fully agree to this request.

Section 8: Response to comments from the Washington State Department of Health:

On August 16, 2004, Russell Mau, Regional Engineer from the Office of Drinking Water at the Washington State Department of Health, provided two comments regarding the proposal.

The first comment emphasized that the Applicant "should consult with the Department of Ecology" concerning any new water uses. Please refer to Section 8 below for additional comments regarding the Department of Ecology.

The second comment advised the Applicant to consult with the Kittitas County Health Department about the potential need for a Group B water system. The Kittitas County Health Department serves as the exclusive regulatory authority for Group B water systems, overseeing both their approval and ongoing operation within the county.

This proposal is classified as a Non-Project Rezone, which means that the rezone does not create any additional parcels. Therefore, the immediate development of a water system for this property is not required at this time. However, once the proposal is approved and moves into the Final Development Plan process, it will result in the creation of two additional parcels for a total of 4 parcels within the proposed rezone, as allowed by the underlying zoning. It is planned to serve these two additional parcels through a shared well as allowed by the Kittitas County Code and the Washington State Code.

The Applicant agrees to consult with the Kittitas County Department of Health and the Washington State Department of Ecology regarding the development of domestic water system plan for this proposal during the Final Development Process.

Section 9: Response to comments from the Washington State Department of Ecology:

On August 28, 2024, the Department of Ecology submitted a comment letter regarding the proposed planned unit development. Their sole concern focused on water usage for the proposed development. The applicant is associated with to two existing water banks: the Big Water Bank and the Reecer Creek Water Bank, both of which have adequate water resources to fulfill the additional demands created by this proposed rezone. The applicant agrees to comply with Kittitas County Water Resource procedures as outlined in Kittitas County Code Chapters 13.35.020 and 13.35.027, ensuring the acquisition of any necessary additional water rights or the provision of a mitigation plan and certificate for any further residential development. This approach meets the requirements set by the Department of Ecology.

Section 10: Response to comments from the Kittitas County Public Works Department:

On August 30, 2024; the Kittitas County Department of Public Works provided comments regarding the following:

Access: This proposal is classified as a Non-Project Rezone, indicating that the rezone itself does not create any additional parcels; therefore, an access permit is not required at this time. However, once the proposal is approved and progresses to the Final Development Plan process, it will lead to the creation of two additional parcels. Per Kittitas County Code and policies, each of these parcels will require a separate Access Permit, which the Applicant agrees to apply for accordingly.

<u>Engineering:</u> This proposal is classified as a Non-Project Rezone, which means that the rezone itself does not involve any grading or filling; therefore, a grading permit is not necessary at this stage. However, once the proposal is approved

and transitions into the Final Development Plan process, access to the two additional lots may require a grading permit during development. When access permits are requested, an analysis will be conducted to determine whether a grading permit will be needed. The Applicant will apply for a grading permit if and when it is deemed necessary.

Survey: No Comments received.

<u>Transportation concurrency:</u> This proposal is classified as a Non-Project Rezone, indicating that the rezone itself will not generate additional traffic. As a result, a transportation concurrency analysis is not necessary at this time. Looking forward, once the proposal is approved and progresses to the Final Development Plan process, it will only lead to the creation of two additional parcels.

According to the ITE Manual, formally known as the Institute of Transportation Engineers Trip Generation Manual, 10th Edition, Volume 2, vehicle trips per day are defined under Land Use Code 210. Here, vehicle trips per day are described as the total number of trips entering and leaving a site over the course of a single day. The current data from the ITE Manual indicates that the average number of vehicle trips per day for this land use is 9.44.

Given that the proposal will result in a maximum of two new parcels, the total number of new daily trips generated by this parcel creation will be 18.88 daily trips (calculated as 9.44 trips per parcel multiplied by 2 parcels equals 18.88 trips).

Kittitas County Code Section 12.04.02.020 outlines that a concurrency evaluation and determination is required for all development applications expected to impact transportation corridors or intersections. However, developments generating 41 or fewer daily trips are exempt from the Transportation Impact Analysis (TIA) and concurrency evaluation requirements. Since this proposal is estimated to

generate only 18.88 additional daily trips, it is exempt from the regulations outlined in the Kittitas County Road Standards.

In recent years, a pattern has emerged during summer Sunday afternoons, particularly between approximately noon and 6 PM, when traffic on Interstate 90 becomes significantly backed up. This congestion often forces traffic onto county roads, including Nelson Siding Road. Several factors contribute to this traffic backup. First, an increase in travelers returning from recreational activities in Eastern Washington, particularly those living in the Puget Sound Basin, coincides with this time frame. Second, ongoing construction to the west of Easton has caused a rerouting of traffic, further contributing to delays.

Once this construction is completed on Interstate 90 between the east side of Lake Keechelus and the town of Easton, some of these traffic issues will likely be alleviated, as the improvements will enhance the freeway's capacity to accommodate more vehicles. Additionally, Washington State is currently evaluating solutions to address rising traffic volumes between Easton and Cle Elum.

In light of these ongoing traffic concerns, the Applicant has agreed not to hold any events during this time frame to help mitigate additional traffic impacts on county roads until these issues are resolved.

<u>Flood:</u> No flood area, therefore, no flood issues.

Water, Mitigation, and Metering: As mentioned earlier in response to the comments from the Department of Ecology, the applicant will adhere to the procedures outlined in Kittitas County Code Chapters 13.35.020 and 13.35.027 and meter new uses.

Airport: No Comments received.

Section 11: Response to comments from the Kittitas PUD

On August 16, 2024, Kittitas PUD indicated that "Kittitas PUD does not have facilities in the area of this project." It is important to note that the proposed project area is served by Puget Sound Energy, who provided no comments.

Section 12: Response to comments from the Snoqualmie Tribe:

The Snoqualmie Tribe, based on the information provided and their understanding of the project and its Area of Potential Effect (APE), had no significant comments to offer at this time.

SECTION 13: Response to comments from the Property Owners

A petition has been submitted by concerned citizens regarding the proposed Planned Unit Development. The Applicant has reviewed the petition, organized it into individual comments, and addressed each comment in detail below.

Comment: The development is supposed to include a horse riding arena. **Response**: An outdoor riding arena has been present on the property for over 40 years, and an indoor arena has been established for more than 30 years.

These facilities have been essential to the "Equestrian Activities" continuously operated by the applicant throughout their ownership of the properties included within the boundaries of the proposed Planned Unit Development. According to Kittitas County Code 17.74.020(3), "Agricultural activity includes, but is not limited to, ... equine activities." Both arenas were constructed and utilized well before the current residential units were built or occupied by residents, including those now living within 500 feet of the property. The applicant intends to continue its agricultural business on the land included within the proposed Planned Unit Development, in accordance with Kittitas County Code 17.74 and RCW 7.48, both of which recognize the Right to Farm in Washington State and Kittitas County.

This proposal is classified as a Non-Project Rezone, meaning a final site development plan is not required at this time. The final site development plan will be submitted for approval to Kittitas County during the Final Development Plan process. Though not required at this phase of the approval process, the original site plan submitted with the application for the proposed Planned Unit Development rezone indicated that the rebuilt indoor arena (1) would be located toward the center on the western side of the property, north of the Little Creek Irrigation ditch and east of Parcels 13632 and 13630. However, the revised Planned Unit Development site plan has relocated the indoor arena to a more

northern section of the property, positioned south of the existing home owned by the Applicant on Parcel 376334.

This new location places the indoor arena approximately 200 feet east of the western property line of Parcel 13630 and about 250 feet south of Nelson Siding Road. In the Agriculture 5 zone, the required side setback is five feet, and the placement of the indoor arena exceeds this requirement by a factor of 40.

(1) The original indoor arena was destroyed during the snowstorm of 2021/2022. Please refer to Section 1B, "Winter Storm of 2021/2022," of this document for additional details.

Comment: The area will attract spectators for up to 12 events a year.

Response: Small events and gatherings have been successfully held on this property for over 35 years. These events have included 4-H training sessions for local participants in horsemanship, along with various community riding activities. Participants have utilized both the indoor and outdoor arenas for training and practicing horsemanship skills, and some individuals may engaged in trail riding on the applicant's property to support ongoing business objectives of the Springtree Ranch.

As stated in Kittitas County Code 17.74.020(3), "Agricultural activity includes, but is not limited to, ... equine activities." Given that these activities have been recurring for the past 35 years and are intended to continue in the future, the Kittitas County Right to Farm Code 17.74 ensures that such events may proceed without interruption.

Comment: Parking for these spectators has not been addressed in the proposal, leaving people to find parking where they can.

Response: All parking for the proposed Planned Unit Development has been and will continue to be confined within its designated boundaries. There will be

no parking permitted in the Nelson Siding Road right-of-way. Since this is a non-project action, designated parking locations do not need to be established at this time. These locations will be identified and approved during the final development process, in accordance with Kittitas County regulations.

As stated in Kittitas County Code 17.74.020(3), "Agricultural activity includes, but is not limited to, ... equine activities." Given that these activities have been ongoing for the past 35 years and are planned to continue in the future, the Kittitas County Right to Farm Code 17.74 ensures that such events may proceed without interruption. Historically, there have not been any parking issues associated with the equine activities, and none are anticipated for the future.

Comment: This development will add more traffic to Nelson Siding Road, where there are numerous complaints about ongoing traffic issues.

Response: Springtree Ranch and its operations have been established for longer than most of the residential developments in the Nelson Siding area, which have significantly contributed to the increased traffic on Nelson Siding Road over the past 20 years. Despite this rise in traffic, the Level of Service for Nelson Siding Road is rated as Level A. The ongoing issuance of Building Permits for those properties that access Nelson Siding Road have the largest impact to the overall traffic increase on the Nelson Siding Road.

In recognition of the traffic challenges on Interstate 90 that lead to increased use of county roads, including Nelson Siding Road on Sunday afternoons during the summer months, the Applicant has agreed not to hold any events or gatherings on Sundays until the traffic issues are resolved. This proactive approach underscores the Applicant's dedication to mitigating potential traffic impacts and ensuring a smoother experience for all residents.

It is anticipated that the Ranch will continue its operations as it has in the past, which is expected to have no additional impact on traffic levels. The Kittitas

County Right to Farm Code 17.74 supports the ongoing operation of agricultural activities, even as surrounding properties transition into residential developments. As outlined in Kittitas County Code 17.74.020(3), "Agricultural activity includes, but is not limited to, ... equine activities," which is the primary focus of Springtree Ranch.

The planned creation of two additional parcels in the future is not expected to significantly impact traffic levels on Nelson Siding Road. For more details on the potential effects of these new parcels, please see Section 9: Response to Comments from the Kittitas County Public Works Department regarding: Transportation Concurrency.

Comment: If there is a proposed parking area, where will it be located?

Response: As addressed above, all parking will be contained within the boundaries of the proposed Planned Unit Development. There will be no parking within the Nelson Siding Road right of way. As this is a non-project action designated parking locations are not required to be established at this time.

Designated areas will be established and approved during the final development process, consistent with Kittitas County regulations KCC 17.36.040.

Comment: The proposal is surrounded by homes.

Response: The property proposed for the Planned Unit Development (PUD) has been in the Applicant's family since 1983 prior to any residential housing adjoining or in the immediate vicinity of the ranch. Upon the purchase of the Ranch the Applicant immediately developed the property into a equestrian farm. This farm has historically focused on a variety of equestrian activities, including but not limited to breeding, raising, and training Quarter Horses, as well as boarding outside horses and providing riding instruction.

The Kittitas County Right to Farm Code 17.74 offers protection to ongoing agricultural operations from the effects of residential growth surrounding existing

farms. As outlined in Kittitas County Code 17.74.020(3), "Agricultural activity includes, but is not limited to, ... equine activities," which is the primary focus of Springtree Ranch. Therefore, the farm qualifies for protections against the encroaching urbanization of the Nelson Siding area.

Notably, as shown in the attached aerial photo below taken in July 1993, ten years after the property was purchased and developed, the outdoor arena, indoor arena, round pen, barn, paddocks, and pastureland were all established and actively in use. The 1993 aerial photo clearly indicates that there were no homes constructed adjacent to or near the farm at that time. It was only many years later, after the establishment and operation of Springtree Ranch, that residential homes were built to the north, west, and east of the property.

The existence of these homes today, all of which were developed after Springtree Ranch was firmly established as a functioning equestrian operation, does not diminish the rights of the farm to continue its established use as protected by Kittitas County Right to Farm Code 17.74. By the time the surrounding development began, the farm and its equestrian activities were well-known and actively operated.

In accordance with the rights afforded to property owners under Kittitas County Right to Farm Code 17.74, particularly those whose operations predate adjacent developments, we assert our right to maintain and enhance our equestrian operations under the proposed Planned Unit Development.



The location of the Springtree Ranch in this 1993 aerial photo is highlighted in green and clearly shows that there was no residential use adjacent to the Ranch facilities.

Comment: This is not a commercial or business area.

Response: The operations of Springtree Ranch are specifically protected under Kittitas County Code Chapter 17.74, titled "Right to Farm for the Protection of Agricultural Activities." The equine activities undertaken at Springtree Ranch fall under this protection, as defined in KCC 17.74.020, which states that "Agricultural activity includes, but is not limited to, ... equine activities..." This definition affirms that our equestrian operations are recognized as legitimate agricultural pursuits under county law, ensuring their continued protection.

Comment: What forms of traffic increases can be expected?

Response: Details regarding projected traffic impacts will be evaluated during the permitting process. Please see Section 9: Response to Comments from the Kittitas County Public Works Department regarding: Transportation Concurrency.

Comment: What sound and other mitigation measures will be used and maintained?

Response: The continued operations of Springtree Ranch are specifically protected under Kittitas County Code Chapter 17.74, titled "Right to Farm for the Protection of Agricultural Activities." The equine activities undertaken at Springtree Ranch fall under this protection, as defined in KCC 17.74.020, which states that "Agricultural activity includes, but is not limited to, ... equine activities..." This definition affirms that our equestrian operations are recognized as legitimate agricultural pursuits under county law, ensuring their continued protection.

Comment: If maintenance or use of these mitigation measures eases, what recourse will the county provide for affected neighbors?

Response: As the farming activities fall under the protection of KCC 17.74, titled "Right to Farm for the Protection of Agricultural Activities," the farming activities will be required to meet the requirements of said code.

Comment: The proposed indoor arena is adjacent to the property lines of Parcel 13632 (2144 Nelson Siding Rd) and Parcel 13630. What is the proposed setback from the indoor arena to the parcel lines, and what is the expected noise increase?

Response: In the Agricultural 5 (Ag-5) zone the required side yard setback is five (5) feet specified as follows: "KCC 17.28A.050 Yard Requirements - Side: The side yard shall be a minimum of five (5) feet." This indicates that the indoor arena, under the current Ag-5 zoning, could theoretically be constructed as close as 5 feet from the property line.

However, the applicant has revised the site plan for the proposed Planned Unit Development (PUD) and is now proposing to relocate the rebuilding of the indoor arena to approximately 200 feet from the west adjoining property lines. This revision reflects a commitment to greater consideration for neighboring properties and enhances the overall development plan.

Comment: Parcel 13632 (2144 Nelson Siding Rd) has a KRD lateral that runs along the parcel line between the proposed development and the indoor riding arena.

Response: The KRD lateral is located within an easement that protects it from any intrusion by the Applicant. The Applicant not only uses this KRD lateral itself but also has a long history of working with other users in maintaining and improving this lateral. There will be no construction or disturbance to the KRD lateral within the easement associated with this KRD lateral.

Comment: The Little Creek irrigation ditch runs adjacent to the proposed riding arena. What protections will be implemented for this water source?

Response: First, the Little Creek Irrigation Ditch easement benefits the Applicant's property and burdens the property to the west. The properties to the west do not have any rights to the Little Creek Irrigation Ditch. The Applicant is the primary user of the Little Creek irrigation ditch. There will be no construction or disturbance to the Little Creek Irrigation Ditch within the easement associated with the Little Creek Irrigation Ditch.

Comment: The developer has maintained a derelict house on Parcel 376334. What are the intentions for this house if the development plan is approved? Response: The house on Parcel 376334 was occupied by unauthorized renters who refused to vacate the premises after ceasing to pay rent, effectively becoming squatters. These individuals caused damage to the property before leaving. Additionally, the property sustained further damage due to heavy

snowfall from the damaging snowstorm mentioned previously. Following the successful completion of the Planned Unit Development (PUD) process, the house will be demolished and removed, with the possibility of replacing it with a new structure.

Comment: The developer has left derelict cars and trash visible on Nelson Siding Road, negatively impacting the area and potentially affecting home values.

Response: All vehicles that require licensing are compliant with local regulations. The property currently meets all county requirements, and any concerns regarding trash will be managed by the developer to ensure ongoing adherence to county code. There are some remaining materials leftover from the destruction that the winter storm caused to the Springtree Ranch Facilities. As the facilities are rebuilt, these remaining materials will be used, stored, or removed.

Comment: The applicant has previously applied to Kittitas County to redevelop this area for more homes, which was denied. Could this proposal suggest an attempt to circumvent zoning regulations?

Response: No. This property was approved for a Cluster Subdivision under an out-of-date Kittitas County cluster subdivision code. The applicant decided not to move forward with said Cluster Subdivision at that time. This is a separate rezoning process under a different section of the code.

Comment: Where will these new homes be built?

Response: Locations for the new homes will be detailed in the Final Development Plan submitted for approval as required by Kittitas County Code 17.36.

Comment: What lot sizes are proposed for each home?

Response: Lot sizes will be outlined in the Final Development Plan and will comply with county zoning requirements.

Comment: How will water be supplied to each proposed new home?

Response: The applicant has access to senior water rights through various water banks that it is associated with. All new use of water will either be mitigated or there will be a transfer of water rights with all being approved by the Kittitas County Department of Health or the Washington State Department of Ecology. See above for Section 7: "Response to comments from the Washington State Department of Health" and Section 8: "Response to comments from the Washington State Department of Ecology."

Section 13: Response to comments from Roger Olson

The applicant has thoroughly examined the comments submitted by Roger Olson, addressing each point paragraph by paragraph. Responses to these comments begin with >>>>, and the applicant's replies are in red ink for clarity. The detailed review of the submitted comments are below.

Rezone

The applicant states that the current Ag-5 zoning "would eliminate the ranching, farming, equestrian, and recreational operations within the property. I see no reason why those activities could easily be retained if the property was left as is or was divided up into four 5-acre parcels and one 7.27-acre parcel.

>>>>The proposed PUD is meant to create one large parcel for the Farm and Ranch operations and 3 smaller parcels for residential uses.

Another option is to utilize the clustering of homes within the PUD and maintain the underlying density of 1 dwelling unit per 5 acres. It is of interest to note that the applicant's family homes are NOT clustered but dispersed and isolated thereby avoiding clustered living. This request appears to be nothing more than a money-making opportunity for the developer at the expense of the local community and at the expense of a diminished rural character.

>>>> In response to the concerns raised by adjoining property owner Roger Olson regarding the proposed development, it is important to emphasize that objections based solely on a "not in my backyard" sentiment do not provide valid grounds for opposing the project, particularly when the proposed development complies with all applicable codes and regulations established by Kittitas County. It is noteworthy that the agricultural operations of Springtree Ranch predate Mr. Olson's ownership of his property by over 12 years and are protected under the Kittitas County Right to Farm

Code 17.74. Additionally, Chapter 17.36 of the Kittitas County Code outlines the regulations governing Planned Unit Development (PUD) zones. While this chapter does not require clustering for PUDs, it does permit increased density in specific situations where development rights are transferred, and amenities are provided.

Relating to KCC (Kittitas County Code) 17.36.010-PUD zone, purpose and intent

- a. To encourage more innovative design than is generally possible under conventional zoning and subdivision regulations; As stated above, a more "innovative design" is not needed since applicant's current activities can be continued without resorting to a PUD. Applicant can retain as many parcels as needed to accomplish goals and sell those not needed.
 - >>>> If zoning remains unchanged, the Applicant would be required to subdivide the property into 5-acre parcels to create home sites that can be financed for family members and others. If this happens, the option for a Planned Unit Development (PUD) that allows for the creation of three small residential parcels along with one larger farm parcel would no longer be feasible. This change would adversely affect the ability to finance ongoing farming operations on the property.
- b. To encourage more economical and efficient use of land, streets, and public services; As stated above, current operations can continue under current zoning and meet this intent.
 - >>>> Chapter 17.36 regarding Planned Unit Developments encourages a more economical and efficient use of land. The proposed PUD would facilitate necessary residential development on smaller parcels while permitting farming to continue on one large parcel, enabling financing for both residential and agricultural uses to proceed effectively.
- c. To preserve and create usable open space and other amenities superior to conventional developments; Again, this PUD plan is not the only way to preserve operations. No open space is planned in the PUD. Current

zoning would yield more open space. The PUD plan contains no "superior" amenities that can't be accomplished under current zoning. "Superior" amenities, as in additional allowed uses, could diminish rural character compared to the underly density allowed uses.

>>>> Clearly, as stated above, this proposed PUD is being used to create <u>usable</u> open space not impacted by residential use for the continued operation of the farming activities. Additionally, the proposed PUD meets the requirements of a Planned Unit Development under KCC Chapter 17.36. Superior amenities include but are not limited to pastures, trails, and training areas.

d. To preserve important natural features of the land, including topography natural vegetation, and views; The preservation of important features of the land, etc., need not be accomplished only via a PUD as demonstrated above. Many of the natural features of the land will become a part of the built environment, which is not a goal of our comprehensive plan and should be avoided.

>>>> The Applicant is committed to preserving the natural features of the land, including its topography, native vegetation, and scenic views. The Planned Unit Development (PUD) proposal is carefully designed to enhance and coexist harmoniously with these vital elements of the landscape.

There will be no substantial alterations to the natural features of the property. The pastures will remain untouched, maintaining the landscape in its current form. The hillside will retain its natural contours, with any adjustments made only where new residences are constructed.

Additionally, our PUD intends to integrate these natural features into the overall development design, which includes:

Preservation of Natural Vegetation: We will ensure that significant areas of existing vegetation are preserved, including pastures and forested

regions, which provide habitats for local wildlife and contribute to the region's ecological balance. Species such as elk, deer, small mammals, ducks, and various birds currently coexist with our equestrian operations, and the Applicant is committed to maintaining these uses to support the natural habitat. Note that Mr. Olson's property which once was a producing hay farm has been urbanized with one large lawn.

Enhancement of Scenic Views: The PUD layout has been strategically planned to highlight and enhance the scenic views of the surrounding landscape rather than obstruct them. Home placements will be designed to minimize visual disruption to the natural environment.

Establishment of Conservation Areas: We are dedicated to designating specific areas within the development as conservation zones where no construction will take place. This approach will safeguard the integrity of the land and enable the continuation of the existing pastures and forests.

Integration of Trails: The proposed design will include riding and walking paths, as well as open spaces that encourage residents to enjoy and appreciate the natural beauty of the area while preserving the existing environment.

Through these initiatives, the PUD aims to respect and enhance the existing natural features of Springtree Ranch. This approach is in alignment with the objectives of our comprehensive plan and ensures that development is carried out sustainably, benefiting both the community and the environment.

e. To encourage development of a variety of housing types and densities; Our rural community does not need a larger variety of housing types and densities that are not already available under existing zoning opportunities. We do have too many less than 5-acre parcels, we do not

need more. This proposal will yield 9 homes on 27 acres for an average of one dwelling unit per 3 acres and with the potential of accessory dwelling units, there could be as many as 18 dwelling units on 27 acres for a density of one dwelling unit per 1.5 acres in addition to increased allowed uses (see below).

>>>> The proposed Planned Unit Development has been revised to reduce the proposed density. The density of the proposal will align with the underlying zoning, allowing for a maximum of four units.

- f. To encourage energy conservation, including the use of passive solar energy in project design and development to the extent possible; Not applicable.
 >>> The applicant is considering the installation of solar panels on the new shop building, as well as the potential for placing solar panels on the new indoor arena.
- g. To encourage development of areas or site characterized by special features of geography, topography, size, shape; and/or Not applicable.
 >>> As noted in the initial application response to KCC 17.36, the applicant is not applying for a PUD based on the presence of special geographical or topographical features of the property. Rather, the application seeks to address other aspects of development that align with the goals of a Planned Unit Development.
- h. To permit flexibility of design that will create desirable public and private open space,; to vary the type, design and layout of buildings,; and to utilize the potentials of individual sites and alternative energy services to the extent possible; Again, current zoning could accomplish applicant's goals, without diminishing rural character. After all, the whole reason for getting rid of less than 5-acre parcels was to preserve rural character as mandated by the GMA (Growth Management Act).

>>> The proposed Planned Unit Development not only maintains but enhances the rural character of the area by protecting the ongoing equestrian activities permitted under KCC 17.74.

Increased allowed uses

Applicant has stated in the Springtree Ranch Planned Unit Development document 1C, response to KCC17.36 PUD Zone that the following additional uses may be included; accessory dwelling units, accessory living quarters, single family dwellings, parks and playgrounds, community buildings, indoor arena, outdoor arena, round pens, trails, and space for recreational vehicles for overnight stays, other types of recreational vehicles storage, horse trailer storage, and electric vehicle infrastructure. Many of these additional uses would create a lot of noise, dust, traffic and commercial like activity from "events" planned, noise from kids screaming in a park and periods time where all the vehicles would be more like a parking lot, all in a quiet residential neighborhood. We already have a junk yard in the neighborhood, and it has taken 8 years to get to the point of issuing an abatement notice to the junk yard property owner. The County is already too far behind in terms of past mistakes and problems without adding more.

>>>>The activities at Springtree Ranch are not expected to change; they will continue as they have for the past 40 years. It is important to note that objections rooted solely in a "not in my backyard" sentiment do not constitute valid grounds for opposing this project, especially since the proposed development complies with all applicable codes and regulations set forth by Kittitas County. Moreover, the agricultural operations of Springtree Ranch predate Mr. Olson's ownership of his property by more than 12 years and are protected under Kittitas County Right to Farm Code 17.74. Additionally, Chapter 17.36 of the Kittitas County Code outlines the regulations applicable to Planned Unit Development (PUD) zones.

There are many reasons to deny a PUD in rural areas and to not rezone in the first place. A PUD might be a good tool when done right but this one surely is not. It is

particularly ominous rezoning this land without a definite PUD plan. Based on the reasons why PUDs should not be placed in rural areas is enough to deny this rezone. The built environment in this PUD will overwhelm the natural environment and that goes against our Comprehensive Plan "RR-G1: Open space and visual and natural landscape should predominate over the built environment." With 9 homesites, an indoor arena, a hay storage barn, a barn with stalls and paddocks, an outdoor arena, numerous other outbuildings, and the potential for ADUs (accessory dwelling units) and other buildings and additional uses that might be a part of the PUD in the future, the built environment will dominate on the 27-acre site. In addition to the proposed increase in density is the intensive use of the property with the planned indoor arena and equestrian events that would entail 8 events and up to 55 vehicles per event with the possibility of increasing that number of events and vehicles. If this project was on 60 acres, that would be different. We have a local horse ranch, the Double Mint Morgans located on 34 acres with one home and a few outbuildings. East of us is the Dragonwood Equine Facility located on 84 acres with the built environment being relatively much, much smaller because the intensive use is on one acre and is surrounded by 83 acres. This is why PUDs in rural areas should be very carefully looked at. The last I checked, most counties don't allow rural PUDs because they cannot protect rural character. In the few counties in Washington state where rural PUDs are allowed, they are very restricted.

>>>> According to KCC 17.36, Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) are permitted on properties designated for rural land use that are 20 acres or larger. Provided that the Applicant complies with all the necessary regulations,. This property has functioned as an equestrian horse farm for approximately 40 years, well before Mr. Olson purchased his property that adjoins the western border of the proposed PUD. As noted in other sections of this response to comments, we have revised the PUD to include a 5-acre portion of the original proposed PUD property adjacent to Mr. Olson's property to remain zoned as Agriculture 5 (Ag-5).

I haven't had a reason, until now, to pay much attention to what has been going on with rural lands since compliance was achieved around 2013, but it appears TDR credits were changed substantially in 2023. More below under TDR. I don't know what else in our code was changed since then, but there is some background on PUDs to be found in Ordinance 2013-001. This reflects compliance with the GMA. This rezone involves a significant departure from what was complaint in 2013.

>>>> The current Comprehensive Plan, land use designations, and zoning code of Kittitas County are in compliance with the Growth Management Act (GMA). Therefore, the above statement has no relevance to the proposed Planned Unit Development.

In the context of the Growth Management Act (GMA) under RCW 36.70A, provisions regarding Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) can be found, although they may not be explicitly named as "Planned Unit Developments." Instead, the relevant sections focus on rural lands and how they can accommodate various land uses, including more flexible developments like PUDs.

Key References:

RCW 36.70A.060 - Comprehensive Plans—Land Use Element: This section discusses the requirement for comprehensive plans to include land use designations that may support various types of developments, including PUDs.

RCW 36.70A.177 - Rural Element: This section addresses the requirements for the rural element of comprehensive plans, including options for establishing densities, ensuring compatibility with existing uses, and promoting less intensive development patterns. It emphasizes providing for "varied residential densities" and "uses compatible with the rural area" which can accommodate PUD development.

RCW 36.70A.130 (particularly subsection 2 regarding rural development) allows counties planning under the GMA to allow for more flexible design and development standards in rural areas, which can encompass PUDs.

Eastern Washington Growth Management Hearings Board Orders

- 10. In August, 2007 and March, 2008 Kittitas County was held noncompliant and partially invalid as outlined in case No. 07-1-0004c and case No. 07-1-0015 including:
- a. Development resulting in densities of greater than one dwelling unit per five acres is not rural in character and does not protect rural character. (Case No. 07-1-0004c, Issue I and Case No. 07-1-0015, Issue I)
- 31. Existing 3-acre zones within the current Zoning Code has resulted in spotted development that will diminish the rural character of the land.
- 33. After considerable amount of deliberation, Kittitas County determined that existing three-acre zones (R-3, and Ag-3) were not compatible with rural character and therefore, should be eliminated from Rural-designated areas, and finds that the R-3 and Ag 3 zones should be deleted from the Rural designations on zoning maps outside LAMIRDs and UGAs.
- 54. PUDs have to function to protect the rural environment within Kittitas County and be compatible with rural character outside of the designated UGAs.
- 55. PUDs outside of UGAs and LAMIRDs are permitting densities above the underlying rural zones diminishing preservation of rural character and resulting in developments that are urban in nature.
- 59. PUDs in rural areas should be phased out, and substantially developed PUDs should be completed to re-establish rural character to the area which they are located.

This PUD is being used to get around the purpose and intent of Kittitas County's compliance efforts and could put the County in a position of having to rewrite or eliminate our PUD zoning in rural areas.

>>>> The current Comprehensive Plan, land use designations, and zoning code of Kittitas County are in compliance with the Growth Management Act (GMA). Therefore, the above statement has no relevance to the proposed Planned Unit Development.

TDR

In 2023 it appears our TDR credit exchange rate changed substantially. For PUDs, it went from 1 TDR credit=1 dwelling unit for every 20 acres in receiving area in 2013, to 2 additional units per valid sending parcel. So, in 2023 the applicant would have received one additional dwelling unit and in 2024 four additional dwelling units.

>>>> The current Comprehensive Plan, land use designations, and zoning code of Kittitas County are in compliance with the Growth Management Act (GMA). Therefore, the above statement has no relevance to the proposed Planned Unit Development except the actions are allowed and meet the code.

Adding an additional four lots via TDR (Transfer of Development Rights) would exceed the underlying density and diminish rural character in our area. Kittitas county went through the GMA (Growth Management Act) process after they were found to be non-compliant with the GMA because of 3-acre zoning and performance-based cluster development. Three-acre zoning does not maintain rural character which is why the county had to eliminate the 3-acre zoning and replace it with 5-acre zoning. There are far too many 3-acre and smaller parcels in our area that have not yet been developed but when developed, rural character will not be maintained. There is no need for more parcels under 5 acres.

>>>> The current Comprehensive Plan, land use designations, and zoning code of Kittitas County are in compliance with the Growth Management Act (GMA). Therefore, the above statement has no relevance to the proposed Planned Unit Development except the actions are allowed and meet the code.

In this case, the sending parcels are valued at less than \$15,000 each because, presumably, of the wetlands and limited if any buildable land. The applicant will be able to build two units on each of the two receiving parcels, greatly increasing the value of that land. The sending parcels were not likely to be built upon. The critical area still must be maintained even if the parcels had enough buildable land. I can understand 500 acres of 20-acre zoning transferring development rights to a more urban PUD, giving that PUD 50 more dwelling units. However, using the TDR to increase density in a rural area whose rural character is already threatened by so many less than 5-acres parcel is a perversion of the TDR and the PUD zoning.

>>>> The current Comprehensive Plan, land use designations, and zoning code of Kittitas County are in compliance with the Growth Management Act (GMA). Therefore, the above statement has no relevance to the proposed Planned Unit Development except the actions are allowed and meet the code.

The county has an ADU policy that allows rural parcels to double rural density on parcels greater than 3 acres. That creates more than an adequate potential for additional density. This 27-acre parcel could have 10 dwelling units on it if divided into 5 acres parcels. That is one dwelling unit per 2.5 acres. Applicant states that ADUs may be included in this project. As stated above, if the PUD ends up being made up of 3-acre parcels, minimum acreage for an ADU, with a dwelling unit on each, that is 9 dwelling units (interesting that with the added 4 TDR units, the number is nine dwelling units, which is what 3-acre zoning would have allowed). Putting an ADU on each parcel would yield 18 housing units on 27 acres for an average of one dwelling unit per 1.5 acres. The ADU policy may cause rural character problems down the road if too many 3-acre parcels take advantage of this policy and certainly if this PUD takes advantage of ADUs.

>>>Though ADUs are allowed in Kittitas County Code, no ADUs are discussed, planned or applied for regarding this project.

In Exhibit 7-Project Narrative, the applicant states the purpose of this comp plan amendment is to rebuild and improve the existing residential, farming and ranch operations that currently and have historically occupied this property through a PUD rezone. Historically, there were NOT 9 homesites and use of the land was more rural than what is being proposed. The applicant's purpose can easily be achieved without this rezone.

>>>> The current Comprehensive Plan, land use designations, and zoning code of Kittitas County are in compliance with the Growth Management Act (GMA). Therefore, the above statement has no relevance to the proposed Planned Unit Development except the actions are allowed and meet the code.

Criteria for a rezone: KCC 17.98.020 Petitions

- 1. A petition requesting a change on the zoning map from one zone to another must demonstrate that the following criteria are met:
 - a. The proposed amendment is compatible with the comprehensive plan; and The comp plan's RR-G1 states that "Open space and visual and natural landscape should predominate over the built environment. That will not happen with this PUD, therefore it is not compatible with the comp plan. In the applicant's response exhibit 8a he states, "Residential density is not to be increased and meets the county zoning requirements of 1 unit per 5 acres". That is not true. Density could be as high as 1 unit per 1.5 acres as shown above. The comp plan's RR-PI states that "The County shall promote the retention of its overall character by establishing zoning classifications that preserve rural character identified to Kittitas County. As shown above, this rezone cannot preserve rural character. The comp plan's RR-G7 states "The County should consistently work to preserve and maintain

the rural character of Kittitas County for the benefit of its residents." Again, preserving rural character is a problem with this rezone. Those are just some examples of how this rezone is not compatible with the comprehensive plan.

>>>> This Proposed PUD preserves rural character as follows:

- 1. Compatibility with the Comprehensive Plan: The assertion that the proposed Planned Unit Development (PUD) is incompatible with the Comprehensive Plan's designation—which emphasizes that "open space and visual and landscape should predominate over the environment"-overlooks the design elements included in our proposal, which aim to maintain the ongoing operation of Springtree Ranch while preserving usable open space. The PUD is intentionally designed to enhance the natural landscape by creating designated usable open spaces including the farming operation and integrating the development with the existing rural environment, including the agricultural operations. This approach not only preserves but also enhances open space, aligning with the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.
- 2. **Density Claims**: The statement in Exhibit 8a that "residential density is not to be increased and meets the county zoning requirements of 1 unit per 5 acres" accurately reflects the conditions of agriculture five zoning. While the regulations allow some flexibility, our PUD plan has been developed to adhere strictly to existing density regulations. As stated above the proposed PUD has been revised to establish 4 parcels within the proposed Planned Unit Development which is equal to the underlaying zoning of AG 5.

- 3. **Preservation of Rural Character**: The RR-PI section of the Comprehensive Plan reinforces the county's commitment to preserving rural character through appropriate zoning classifications. Our proposed PUD not only maintains agricultural uses but also aligns with this objective by facilitating low-density residential development integrated with agricultural practices. This intentional design preserves the rural character of Kittitas County while accommodating the necessary growth to support the community.
- 4. **Protection of Agricultural Activities**: The Kittitas County Right to Farm Code (KCC 17.74) safeguards ongoing agricultural operations, recognizing them as vital to the rural landscape. Our PUD proposal is crafted to sustain and enhance these agricultural activities, ensuring that existing farming operations can continue without disruption.
- 5. Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs): The practice of transferring development rights into PUDs, as outlined in Kittitas County regulations, is an established method aimed at protecting critical areas while allowing for planned development. Our proposal leverages this provision to promote responsible growth that adheres to sustainable land use principles.

We firmly believe that the proposed PUD is in full alignment with the Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan, as it supports agricultural uses, preserves the rural character, and incorporates design elements that promote open space and environmental stewardship. We are dedicated to addressing any valid concerns and fostering open dialogue as the project progresses. b. The proposed amendment bears a substantial relation to the public health, safety or welfare; and In petitioners exhibit 8B it is stated that since the comprehensive plan and zoning standards were established to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public and that the comprehensive plan was adopted without it being appealed or overturned, that that alone shows this project has substantial relation to public, safety and welfare. The comprehensive plan was not challenged on the PUD zoning because a rezone can be appealed and challenged and overturned. The county was left to ensure that rural PUDs protected rural character and were compliant with the GMA. This gave the county great latitude with rural PUDs. Let us not abuse it.

>>>This proposal preserves the public health, safety, and welfare pursuant to Kittitas County Code and RCW 36.70A as follows:

The concerns raised regarding the proposed Planned Unit Development (PUD) and the connection to public health, safety, and welfare by Mr. Olson are in error. It is important to clarify that the Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan, land use designations, and zoning code are all in full compliance with the Growth Management Act (GMA), as outlined in RCW 36.70A.

The actions taken within the parameters of county code are designed to protect the public's health, safety, and welfare. The Comprehensive Plan was developed with extensive public input and has undergone a thorough review process, resulting in a framework that supports sustainable development while preserving the rural character of Kittitas County.

The assertion that the existing zoning standards were not challenged does not undermine their validity or the intent behind them. Rather, it reinforces the understanding that the regulations governing rural PUDs grant Kittitas County the authority to manage development in alignment with community values and goals. Rather than abusing this flexibility, we believe the proposed development aligns with overall goals to maintain rural character and public welfare.

In summary, the proposed PUD is wholly consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the GMA, ensuring that all actions taken related to this project are protective of the community's health, safety, and welfare. We look forward to continuing dialogue with the community as we move forward with this project.

C. The proposed amendment has merit and value for Kittitas County or a sub-area of the county; and If done right, there might be some merit to this rezone, but as is, there is no merit or value at all.

>>>> While Mr. Olson is against the proposed amendment as it is in his back yard, we believe that the Planned Unit Development (PUD) holds significant merit for Kittitas County and its residents.

Over the past 20 years, upper Kittitas County has lost nearly all of its farming operations, as rising land values for residential home sites have made it increasingly difficult to sustain agricultural activities. The ongoing growth of the residential population continues to encroach on these farms, leading to

further reductions in agricultural land and the displacement of farming operations in favor of new home developments.

This Planned Unit Development is vital for the county as it supports the ongoing operation of a functioning farm while designating land specifically for agricultural use.

Maintaining farming within our community is essential for preserving the rural character of Kittitas County. Without such protections, the area risks becoming increasingly urbanized, with large parcels eventually divided into smaller lots to accommodate new residents, further eroding our agricultural foundations.

By approving this PUD, the county takes a proactive stance in preserving agricultural practices and ensuring that the rural nature of our community is maintained for future generations. This development offers a balanced approach that facilitates both residential growth and the continuation of agricultural operations, providing critical protection against unchecked urban expansion.

d. The proposed amendment is appropriate because of changed circumstances or because of a need for additional property in the proposed zone or because the proposed zone is appropriate for reasonable development of the subject property and Circumstances have not changed enough to warrant this rezone. There is no need for additional property. There are many 3-acre lots available for development and there are larger lots available and smaller lots available. The proposed rezone is NOT appropriate for this property.

>>>> In response to these comments, it is essential to recognize that there has been—and continues to be—an ongoing change

in circumstances affecting the Nelson Siding Road area. As previously mentioned, the urbanization of this region has led to the conversion of a significant portion of the available farmland in the Nelson Siding Road area into 5-acre residential parcels over the past 20 years. This transformation has substantially reduced the amount of land available for productive farming, which illustrates the need for adaptation to changing land use dynamics.

The proposed rezone is structured to provide protection for the continued operation of Springtree Ranch's equestrian activities that are protected by KCC 17.74 Right to Farm, ensuring that these operations can coexist with residential development. Furthermore, there is a genuine need for additional properties within the Planned Unit Development zone, as it represents the best approach to safeguard the ongoing agricultural activities specific to this property.

Developing this land through the Planned Unit Development framework is a reasonable and practical solution, allowing for residential growth while simultaneously supporting the ongoing equestrian operations at Springtree Ranch. By creating usable open spaces within the development, we can further enhance the character of the area and protect the agricultural heritage that Springtree Ranch represents. This thoughtful approach not only respects the past but also accommodates future needs in a sustainable manner.

e. The subject property is suitable for development in general conformance with zoning standards for the proposed zone; and This property is NOT suitable for PUD zoning. The level of intensity is too high for a rural PUD. Again, rural character must be maintained and this PUD will not maintain rural character.

>>>> These comments reflect a misunderstanding of the ongoing changes in the Nelson Siding Road area. Once characterized by family farms and a rural environment, this area is increasingly transforming into an urbanized community, with previously farmed land being converted into 5-acre rectangular parcels for single-family homes.

The proposed Planned Unit Development (PUD) is designed to stabilize and support the ongoing operation of Springtree Ranch's equestrian facilities and provide usable open space while also allowing for the creation of residential parcels for housing for the applicant's family and others. This PUD is one of the few viable solutions to help preserve the rural character of the area by ensuring that ranching operations continue alongside residential development.

By incorporating usable open spaces within the PUD, we can further enhance the landscape, maintaining the connection to the agricultural heritage of the region. The development not only respects the existing rural character but also integrates it into future use, creating a balanced community that accommodates both equestrian and residential needs.

f. The proposed amendment will not be materially detrimental to the use of properties in the immediate vicinity of the subject property and I and my neighbors find this PUD rezone will be materially detrimental to the use of our properties. A number of us have adjacent homesites whose rural character will be

diminished if this rezone were to be approved. Others in the surrounding Nelson Siding area fear they could have one of these PUDs next to them. Rural character will be diminished, the intensity of development and commercial use will be detrimental to our comfort and repose, increased traffic during "events" and increased traffic because of increased density will be materially detrimental to the use of our properties as rural residential residents.

>>>> As previously noted in our responses to the comments received, Kittitas County and the State of Washington have established the Right to Farm Code (KCC 17.74) and RCW 7.48 to protect established farming operations from pressures related to the growth of surrounding residential units. These laws are specifically designed to ensure that farming activities can continue, even as more homes are built in proximity.

The true character of the Nelson Siding Road area has historically been shaped by the small family farms that have existed in this region since the mid-to-late 1800s. Over the past 20 years, the area has seen significant residential development and urbanization, with this trend accelerating.

The proposed Planned Unit Development (PUD) will facilitate the continued operation of Springtree Ranch's equestrian farming activities, while also allowing for reasonable residential development. This balanced approach is aligned with county and state efforts to protect ongoing small farming operations. Far from being detrimental, the PUD aims to sustain the agricultural character of the area while integrating residential use in a manner that complements the existing environment.

Concerns about diminished rural character should be weighed against the provisions of the PUD, which are intended to maintain usable open spaces and ensure that the operations of the ranch continue unimpeded. The proposed development is structured to respect the rural landscape and community while providing for the necessary growth of both agricultural and residential components.

- g. The proposed changes in use of the subject property shall not adversely impact irrigation water deliveries to other properties; and
 - >>>>The proposed Planned Unit Development enhances the use of irrigation water in the area as the owners of Springtree Ranch will continue to enhance the use of irrigation water within the ranch and throughout the area.
- h. The proposed amendment is in full compliance with KCC Chapter 17.13 Transfer of Development Rights, if the proposed amendment allows greater than one (1) dwelling unit (du) per twenty (20) acres or proposes to decrease the dwelling units (du) allowed in the zone classification.
 - >>>> The proposed plan development has been revised and does not propose to increase density through KCC Chapter 17.13 Transfer of Development Rights.

Section 15: Attachments

- A. Letter To Kittitas County Planning Department Regarding Revision to Proposed Planned Unit Development
- B. Letter To Kittitas County Planning Department Regarding Right to Farm State and County Codes
- C. Photos of Winter Storm Damage
- D. Aerial Photos
- E. Ownership

Attachment A

Letter To Kittitas County Planning Department Regarding Revision to Proposed Planned
Unit Development

Jamey Ayling Kittitas County Planning Manager

September 24, 2024

Re: Proposed comprehensive plan map amendment for Springtree Ranch Response to comments

Thank you for providing us with the comments received by Kittitas County regarding the rezoning of the Springtree Ranch property from Agricultural 5 to a Planned Unit Development (PUD).

After careful consideration of the feedback from both the agencies and the public, we are proposing the following amendments to the original Planned Unit Development proposal:

- 1. **Size Reduction**: We propose to reduce the size of the Planned Unit Development from 27.27 acres to 22.27 acres. Please see the attached site plan for details.
- 2. **Western Boundary Adjustment**: The amended site plan will indicate that the proposed PUD will be reduced in size along its western boundary, adjacent to portions of parcels 13632, 13630, and 13629. This area will now remain designated as Agricultural 5 zoning. Refer to the attached site plan for specific changes.
- 3. **Relocation of Indoor Arena**: Though this is a non-project rezone, the original site plan depicted the reconstructed indoor arena adjacent to parcels 13632 and 13630. The revised site plan now shows that the indoor arena would be reconstructed in the central northern portion of the property. Please see the attached site plan for this updated configuration.
- 4. Addressing Traffic Concerns: To mitigate traffic congestion on Nelson Siding Road on Sunday afternoons during summer, the applicant has agreed not to hold any events or gatherings during the mid-summer on Sundays until the traffic issues are resolved.

We believe these revisions will address several of the concerns raised and better align the development with the surrounding community.

Attached to this letter is a document we have prepared that outlines our responses to the comments received from the agencies and the public.

Pat Deneen

Springtree Ranch, LLC

Attachment B

Letter To Kittitas County Planning Department Regarding Right to Farm State and County Codes

Jamey Ayling Kittitas County Planning Manager

September 24, 2024

Re: **Right To Farm** and Relationship to Proposed Comprehensive Plan Map Amendment for Springtree Ranch

This letter outlines the strong legal protections in place for established equestrian operations in Kittitas County, as provided by both Washington State Law (RCW 7.48) and the Kittitas County Code (KCC 17.74).

As your department knows, the expansion of residential development into areas traditionally used for agriculture can create conflicts regarding land use. While it is essential to seek a balance that meets the needs of all residents, it is equally important to acknowledge the legal framework designed to safeguard the rights of farmers and ranchers who have been engaged in lawful agricultural practices for many years.

Many of the comments received by the County concerning the rezoning of the Springtree Ranch Property from Ag-5 to Planned Unit Development zoning directly contradict these legal protections.

Washington State's Commitment to Protecting Farms

The Washington State legislature has recognized the vital role agriculture plays in the state's economy and environment. To safeguard farmland from being pushed out by development pressure, the legislature enacted the Right to Farm Act (RCW 7.48) with the following key provisions of RCW 7.48.300 - 7.48.320 relevant to equestrian operations:

Presumption of Reasonableness (RCW 7.48.305): Agricultural activities, including those related to horse farms, are presumed "reasonable" and not a nuisance if they were established before surrounding nonagricultural activities. This places the burden on anyone alleging a nuisance to prove otherwise.

Broad Definition of "Agricultural Activity" (RCW 7.48.310): The law's definition of what constitutes an "agricultural activity" is broad and inclusive. While not explicitly mentioning "equestrian," examples like "keeping of bees," "roadway movement of livestock," and "employment and use of labor" make it clear that horse operations fall under this umbrella. This interpretation is further supported by the inclusion of "recreational equine use" in the definition of "farm product."

Kittitas County's Right to Farm Ordinance - Reinforcing State Law

Kittitas County has gone a step further in solidifying these protections by enacting its own Right to Farm Ordinance (KCC 17.74). This ordinance complements state law and provides additional clarity specific to the county with the following key provisions of KCC 17.74 Relevant to Equestrian Operations:

Explicit Protection for Existing and Ongoing Agriculture (KCC 17.74.040 & 17.74.070): This ordinance explicitly protects agricultural activities, as defined in the code, on lands zoned for agriculture, regardless of surrounding land uses. This includes protection for "existing and ongoing agricultural activities" even within urban growth areas and urban growth nodes.

Unambiguous Inclusion of "Equine Activities" (KCC 17.74.040): Removing any doubt, KCC 17.74.040 clearly lists "equine activities" as a protected agricultural activity. This specific inclusion eliminates any ambiguity about the applicability of the ordinance to allow horse farms within the county.

Proactive Notification and Disclosure (KCC 17.74.060): The county's ordinance mandates that individuals purchasing property near agricultural lands be informed about potential inconveniences that may arise from those operations. This requirement helps set realistic expectations for new residents, potentially minimizing future conflicts.

Conclusion

The laws in Washington State and Kittitas County demonstrate a clear commitment to preserving agricultural land and protecting the livelihoods of those working in the agricultural sector, including equestrian operations. These laws recognize that farms and ranches were often in place before the encroachment of residential development and that certain inconveniences are inherent in agricultural activities.

The Kittitas County Planning Department plays a crucial role in upholding these legal protections and ensuring that existing equestrian businesses are not unfairly burdened by the pressures of encroaching development.

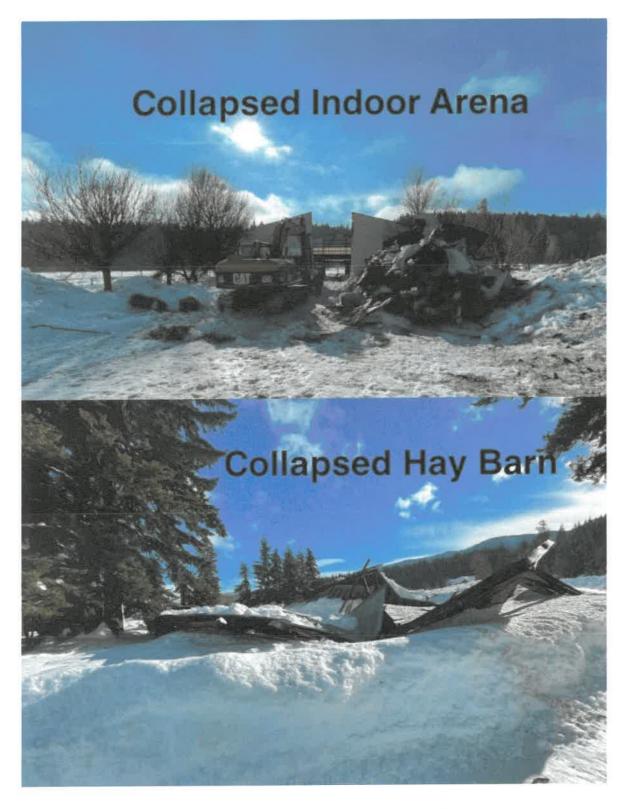
Sincerely,

Springtree Ranch, LLC

Pat Deneen

Attachment C

Photos of Winter Storm Damage



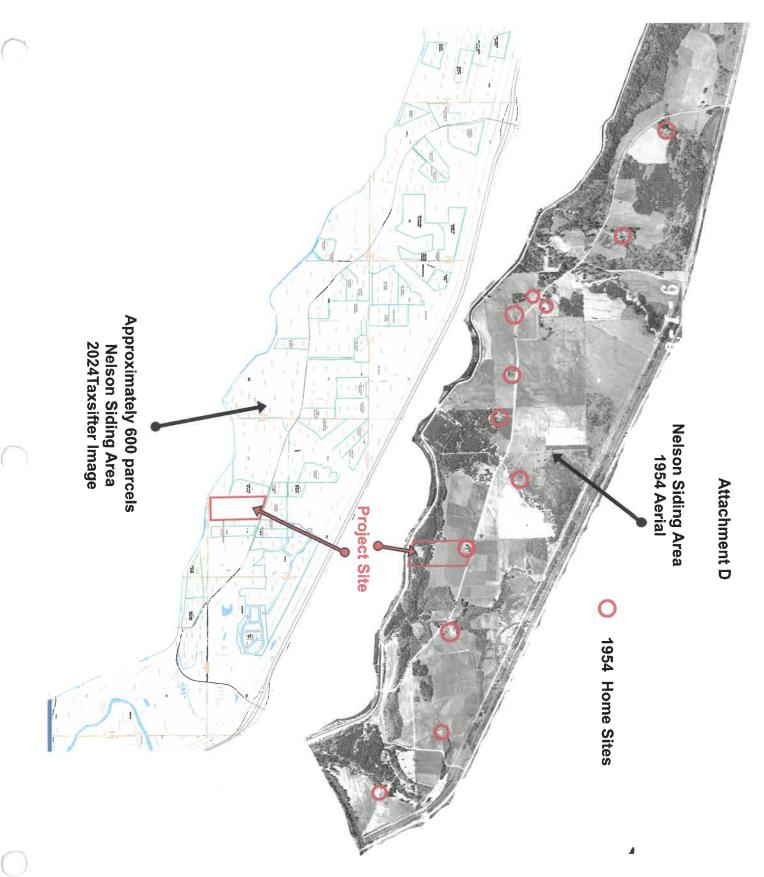
Attachment D

Aerial Photos

On the following page, there are two images. The first is a 1954 aerial photo sourced from the Central Washington University photo archives. This image depicts Nelson Siding Road, showcasing approximately 12 houses that existed at that time, along with evidence that most of the vacant land was utilized for farming.

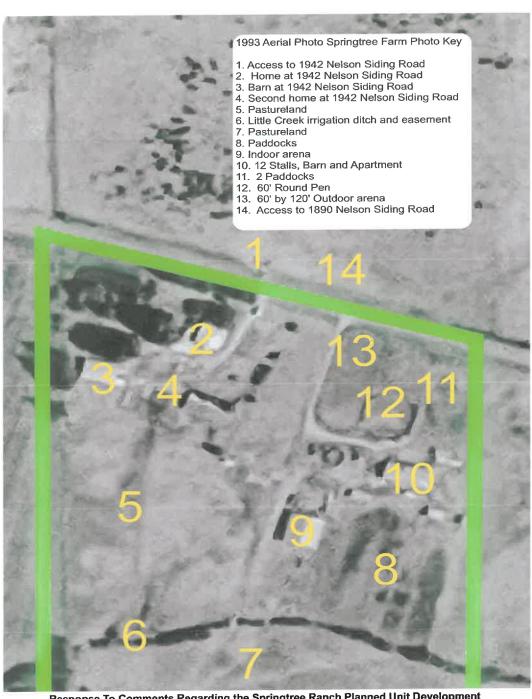
The second image is derived from the Kittitas County Taxsifter program, indicating that approximately 600 parcels have been created in the area since 1954.

Together, these two images illustrate how the region has transformed over the past 70 years, evolving from a predominantly agricultural area into an urbanized rural community. This trend highlights the ongoing pressure to accommodate more residential development in the area in the years to come.



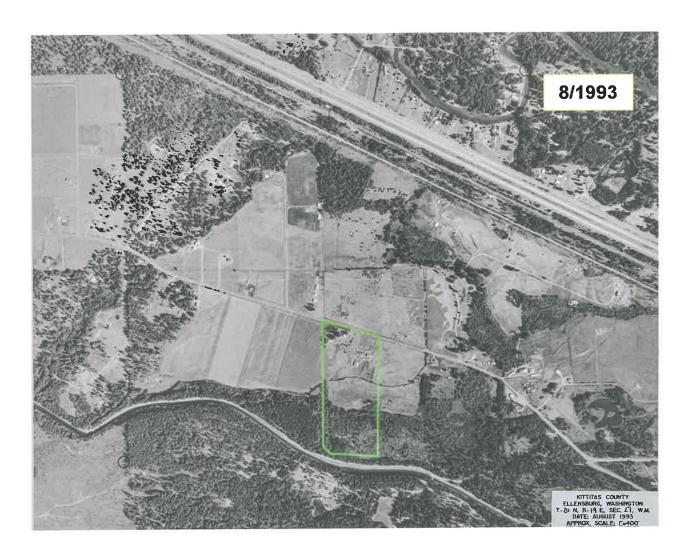
Response To Comments Regarding the Springtree Ranch Planned Unit Development Comprehensive Plan Map Amendment - September 30, 2024 1100

This aerial photo was taken in 1993, ten years after the initial development of Springtree Ranch. This photo shows the ranch as it appeared in August of that year. It is noteworthy that most of the facilities utilized for Springtree Ranch's equestrian activities were already established a decade before this photo was captured. This photo is not to scale as it has been significantly enlarged in order to adequately show all ranch facilities in larger detail.



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The green outline highlights the ownership area of Springtree Ranch. This aerial photo, taken in August 1993 and sourced from Kittitas County records, captures the area ten years after the Springtree Ranch property was purchased and development began. Notably, there are no residences adjacent to or within 500 feet of the ranch property, and it is evident that most of the surrounding land was still being farmed at that time. The Kittitas County Right to Farm Code 17.74 protects this property from the encroachment of ongoing urbanization in the Nelson Siding Road area, which has since resulted in the loss of much farmland to residential housing.



The location of the Springtree Ranch in this 1993 aerial photo is highlighted in green and clearly shows that there was no residential use adjacent to the Ranch facilities.

The following page showcases a photo taken in 2022. This photo clearly illustrates the significant residential development that has occurred in the Nelson Siding Road area for over 70 years. In 1954, this region was characterized by approximately 12 farming homesteads, as shown in a previous aerial image. Since then, the land has been subdivided into over 600 parcels, signaling a substantial shift from agricultural use to residential development.

This ongoing conversion of farmland negatively impacts the rural character of the Nelson Siding Road area. As agricultural lands disappear, the unique open spaces and fields that have defined the region for generations are replaced with neighborhoods, altering both the visual landscape and the community's cultural identity. The diminishing agricultural operations, which contribute to the local economy and heritage, further erode the historical connection to the land.

However, this proposed Planned Unit Development (PUD) aims to preserve some of the remaining farmland and maintain the rural character of the area. By incorporating designated agricultural spaces within the development plan, the PUD intends to support ongoing farming activities and ensure that the community retains its agricultural roots amid increasing residential growth. This thoughtful approach represents a balance between development needs and the preservation of Kittitas County's agricultural heritage.



Response To Comments Regarding the Springtree Ranch Planned Unit Development Comprehensive Plan Map Amendment - September 30, 2024 1100

Attachment E

Springtree Purchase Document

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