

## **CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

For more than a decade, the City of Everett (the City) has been working on the cleanup, environmental conservation, public shoreline access and redevelopment planning for several properties located along the Snohomish River. The area includes the sites commonly known as the former Everett Landfill/Tire Fire site, Eclipse Mill, and the Simpson site (riverfront properties). As a result of these planning and preliminary actions, the City Council concluded that it would best implement the Comprehensive Plan and Shoreline Master Program (SMP) by seeking to have all of its riverfront properties developed by one entity based on a Planned Development Overlay Master Plan to be reviewed through the City's public land use process. The City has entered into an agreement to sell the majority of these riverfront properties to OliverMcMillan LLC (the Proponent), a private developer, who will redevelop the site in partnership with the City of Everett. Pursuant to that agreement the City will construct some of the public improvements on or next to the site including trail extensions, park areas and wetland enhancements. In addition a Port of Everett Property is proposed for inclusion in the proposal, and two small (just over 2 acres) privately held parcels at the north end of the Project area are included in this environmental review.

### **1.2 BACKGROUND/PHASED SEPA REVIEW**

This environmental impact statement (EIS) is part of a phased review under the Washington State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). Phased review is appropriate when going from the plan level to the project level, and when going from an earlier stage to a later stage of development (Washington Administrative Code [WAC] 197-11-060(5)). Various long-range plans for redevelopment of this area have been developed by the City over several decades. The City owned part of the landfill/tire fire area for decades and acquired the additional properties over a period of 13 years (1992 through 2005).

The City has made significant efforts to prepare these properties for redevelopment, without limiting the choice of development options and/or opportunities. The City has taken steps to clean up various industrial pollutants on the properties, conducted brownfields feasibility studies and performed other work that lead to the issuance of a Consent Decree and Cleanup Action Plan by the Department of Ecology for the Everett Landfill/Tire Fire site. The City also added fill to portions of the Simpson development pad and established a public shoreline access area and trail between the Simpson development pad and the Snohomish River.

The City completed "plan-level" and some specific project level environmental review and land use actions from 2000 to 2005. These included a brownfields study and adoption of a Shoreline Public Access Plan, as well as comprehensive updates to the City's Comprehensive Plan and Shoreline Master Program (both of which were subject to SEPA review). The Shoreline Master Program and Comprehensive Plan included Vision statements for the riverfront properties that limit the range of allowed uses for the Project area. In addition, the City constructed the 41<sup>st</sup> Street Bridge overcrossing linking the site to 41<sup>st</sup> Street and reached agreements for Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) track removal and upgrade/relocation on the riverfront property. The City also conveyed a portion of the former Simpson site to the Washington State Department of Transportation for a stormwater facility serving the I-5 high occupancy vehicles (HOV) improvements. The stormwater facilities will include trails that will connect to the city's riverfront trails.

The 41<sup>st</sup> Street bridge project and SMP Update were the subject of settlement agreements resolving issues among the City, Tulalip Tribes and environmental groups to plan for and promote habitat enhancement and restoration. Specific environmental reviews that have been completed for previous activities on the

site and related plans are listed in the *Final Scoping Notice* dated November 28, 2006. These environmental reviews are hereby incorporated by reference in this EIS. Copies are available for review and copying at the City's Department of Planning and Community Development. This EIS does not duplicate or reopen evaluation of issues previously evaluated under SEPA.

Plans for many of the public amenities including trail extensions, park areas, wetland restoration and enhancements that are being undertaken by the City as part of the Project are still at a conceptual level and are described within this environmental review generally unless otherwise noted. The City of Everett is committed to completing the desired improvements to public amenities. Additional environmental review to permit these amenities will be completed when design details are developed more fully over time. (It is currently anticipated that additional SEPA analysis and permit applications for a portion of the work will be completed in April 2008.)

### **1.3 PURPOSE AND NEED**

The purpose of the project is to redevelop this former landfill/industrial property into a high-quality mixed-use development consistent with adopted City policies. City policies and vision statements in the Shoreline Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan contemplate the following:

#### **1.3.1 Lands located along the Snohomish River south of the SR 2 bridge and north of 36<sup>th</sup> Street**

- High quality mixed-use development such as multifamily residential buildings, an office park, light commercial properties and high-quality public access on the site.

#### **1.3.2 Landfill/Tire Fire Site**

- High-quality, master-planned "lifestyle entertainment center."
- Encouragement of public enjoyment of the river and shorelines and emphasis on an attractive, people-oriented mixed-use commercial center with significant public access, abundant parking, a plaza or public center area, and separation between pedestrians and automobiles encouraging pedestrian movement.
- Orientation of buildings and facilities to maximize visual access to the river, estuary and mountain views and provide visual and direct access to the river and prominent riverfront trails. Examples from which to draw design and land use concepts include but are not limited to: Granville Island and Nanaimo in British Columbia, Portland's Riverfront, Pickering Farms in Issaquah, and Carillon Point in Kirkland. However, the design master plan should be tailored to Everett's needs and overall vision for the riverfront. The mixed uses may include commercial/retail, office, multifamily residential, public access to the shoreline, and ample trails and walkways.

#### **1.3.3 Developable Portion of Simpson Site**

- An attractive, master-planned development such as a campus-like office park or residential development.
- Preservation of a substantial portion of the Simpson site for conservation and park purposes except for transportation and utility access.
- Preservation of the riparian corridor along the river with public access including a trail.
- Preservation of the southern portion of the site for open space and park use.