

1 **CHAPTER 4 SHORELINE DESIGNATIONS**

2 **4.1 Introduction**

3 The intent of assigning shoreline designations to specific geographies is to encourage
4 development that will enhance the present or desired character of the shoreline. To
5 accomplish this, segments of shoreline are given a shoreline designation based on
6 existing development patterns, natural capabilities and limitations, and the vision of the
7 County. The shoreline designations are intended to work in conjunction with the
8 comprehensive plan and zoning.

9 Management policies are an integral part of the shoreline designations and are used for
10 determining uses and activities that can be permitted in each shoreline designation.
11 Development regulations specify how and where permitted development can take place
12 within each shoreline designation and govern height and setback.

13 **4.2 Authority**

- 14 1. Local governments are required under the Shoreline Management Act of 1971
15 (RCW 90.58) and the Shoreline Master Program Guidelines (WAC 173-26) to
16 develop and assign a land use categorization system known as “shoreline
17 environment designations” for shoreline areas as a basis for effective shoreline
18 master programs. For purposes of this Program “shoreline designation” is used in
19 place of the term “shoreline environment designation” referred to in WAC 173-
20 26.
- 21 2. The method for local government to account for different shoreline conditions is
22 to assign a shoreline designation to each distinct shoreline section in its
23 jurisdiction. The shoreline designation assignments provide the framework for
24 implementing shoreline policies and regulatory measures for environmental
25 protection, use provisions, and other regulatory measures specific to each
26 shoreline designation.

27 **4.3 Shoreline Designations**

28 The County classification system consists of shoreline designations that are consistent
29 with and implement the Act (RCW 90.58), the Shoreline Master Program Guidelines
30 (WAC 173-26) and the Clark County Comprehensive Growth Management Plan. These
31 designations have been assigned consistent with the corresponding criteria provided for
32 each shoreline designation. In delineating shoreline designations, the County aims to
33 ensure that existing shoreline ecological functions are protected with the proposed pattern
34 and intensity of development. Such designations should be consistent with the policies
35 for restoration of degraded shorelines. All the shoreline designations, even if they are not
36 applied within the city limits or urban growth area are listed here to maintain consistency
37 countywide (See Sections 4.4.5 and 6.2), and are defined in the following sections:

38 Aquatic;

39 Natural;

40 Urban Conservancy;

41 Medium Intensity;

42 High Intensity;

43 Rural Conservancy – Residential; and

44 Rural Conservancy – Resource Lands

45 All shoreline designations can be found in county shoreline jurisdiction with the
46 exception of High Intensity.

47 **4.3.1 Aquatic Shoreline Designation**

48 **4.3.1.1 Purpose**

49 The purpose of the “Aquatic” shoreline designation is to protect, restore, and manage the
50 unique characteristics and resources of the areas waterward of the ordinary high-water
51 mark (OHWM).

52 **4.3.1.2 Designation Criteria**

53 An Aquatic shoreline designation is assigned to lands and waters waterward of the
54 ordinary high-water mark.

55 **4.3.1.3 Areas Designated**

56 The Aquatic shoreline designation applies to areas as shown on a copy of the Official
57 Shoreline Map in Appendix A.

58 **4.3.1.4 Management Policies**

59 In addition to the other applicable policies and regulations of this Program the following
60 management policies shall apply:

- 61 1. New over-water structures should be allowed only for water-dependent uses,
62 public access, recreation, or ecological restoration.
- 63 2. Shoreline uses and modifications should be designed and managed to prevent
64 degradation of water quality and natural hydrographic conditions.
- 65 3. In-water uses should be allowed where impacts can be mitigated to ensure no net
66 loss of shoreline ecological functions. Permitted in-water uses must be managed

- 67 to avoid impacts to shoreline ecological functions. Unavoidable impacts must be
68 minimized and mitigated.
- 69 4. On navigable waters or their beds, all uses and developments should be located
70 and designed to:
- 71 a. minimize interference with surface navigation;
- 72 b. consider impacts to public views; and
- 73 c. allow for the safe, unobstructed passage of fish and wildlife, particularly
74 species dependent on migration.
- 75 5. Multiple or shared use of over-water and water access facilities should be
76 encouraged to reduce the impacts of shoreline development and increase effective
77 use of water resources.
- 78 6. Structures and activities permitted should be related in size, form, design, and
79 intensity of use to those permitted in the immediately adjacent upland area. The
80 size of new over-water structures should be limited to the minimum necessary to
81 support the structure's intended use.
- 82 7. Natural light should be allowed to penetrate to the extent necessary to discourage
83 salmonid predation and to support nearshore habitat unless other illumination is
84 required by state or federal agencies.
- 85 8. Aquaculture practices should be encouraged in those waters and beds most
86 suitable for such use. Aquaculture should be discouraged where it would
87 adversely affect the strength or viability of native stocks or unreasonably interfere
88 with navigation.
- 89 9. Shoreline uses, development, activities, and modifications in the Aquatic
90 shoreline designation requiring use of adjacent landside property should be in a
91 shoreline designation that allows that use, development, activity or modification.

92 **4.3.2 Natural Shoreline Designation**

93 **4.3.2.1 Purpose**

94 The purpose of the “Natural” shoreline designation is to protect those shoreline areas that
95 are relatively free of human influence or that include intact or minimally degraded
96 shoreline ecological functions intolerant of human use. These systems require that only
97 very low-intensity uses be allowed in order to maintain the ecological functions and
98 ecosystem-wide processes. Consistent with the policies of the designation, restoration of
99 degraded shorelines within this environment is appropriate.

100 **4.3.2.2 Designation Criteria**

101 The following criteria should be considered in assigning a Natural shoreline designation:

- 102 1. The shoreline ecological functions are substantially intact and have a high
103 opportunity for preservation and low opportunity for restoration;
- 104 2. The shoreline is generally in public or conservancy ownership or under covenant,
105 easement, or a conservation tax program;
- 106 3. The shoreline contains little or no development, or is planned for development
107 that would have minimal adverse impacts to ecological functions or risk to
108 human safety;
- 109 4. There are low-intensity agricultural uses, and no active forestry or mining uses;
- 110 5. The shoreline has a high potential for low-impact or passive or public recreation
111 and is planned for park or open space uses as part of the comprehensive plan; or
- 112 6. The shoreline is considered to represent ecosystems and geologic types that have
113 high scientific and educational value.

114 **4.3.2.3 Areas Designated**

115 The Natural shoreline designation applies to areas as shown on a copy of the Official
116 Shoreline Map in Appendix A.

117 **4.3.2.4 Management Policies**

118 In addition to the other applicable policies and regulations of this Program the following
119 management policies shall apply:

- 120 1. Any use that would substantially degrade shoreline ecological functions or natural
121 character of the shoreline area should not be allowed.
- 122 2. Scientific, historical, cultural, educational research uses, and low-impact, passive
123 recreational uses may be allowed provided that ecological functions remain intact.
- 124 3. Vegetation should remain undisturbed except for removal of noxious vegetation
125 and invasive species. Proposed subdivision or lot line adjustments, new
126 development or significant vegetation removal that would reduce the capability of
127 vegetation to perform normal ecological functions should not be allowed.
- 128 4. Uses that would deplete physical or biological resources or impair views to or
129 from the shoreline over time should be prohibited.
- 130 5. Only physical alterations that serve to protect a significant or unique physical,
131 biological or visual shoreline feature that might otherwise be degraded or

132 destroyed; or those alterations that are the minimum necessary to support a
133 permitted use should be allowed.

134 6. Only the following types of signs should be considered for location in the
135 shorelines: interpretive, directional, navigational, regulatory, and public safety.

136 **4.3.3 Urban Conservancy Shoreline Designation**

137 **4.3.3.1 Purpose**

138 The purpose of the “Urban Conservancy” shoreline designation is to protect and restore
139 shoreline ecological functions of open space, floodplains, and other sensitive lands,
140 where they exist in urban and developed settings, while allowing a variety of compatible
141 uses.

142 **4.3.3.2 Designation Criteria**

143 The following criteria are used to consider an Urban Conservancy shoreline designation:

- 144 1. The shoreline is located within incorporated municipalities and designated urban
145 growth areas;
- 146 2. The shoreline has moderate to high ecological function with moderate to high
147 opportunity for preservation and low to moderate opportunity for restoration, or
148 low to moderate ecological function with moderate to high opportunity for
149 restoration;
- 150 3. The shoreline has open space or critical areas that should not be more intensively
151 developed;
- 152 4. The shoreline is not highly developed and is likely in recreational use. The
153 shoreline has the potential for development that is compatible with ecological
154 restoration. The shoreline is planned for a park, as open space, or for a Master
155 Planned Resort; or
- 156 5. The shoreline has moderate to high potential for low-impact, passive or active
157 water-oriented recreation where shoreline ecological functions can be maintained
158 or restored.

159 **4.3.3.3 Areas Designated**

160 The Urban Conservancy shoreline designation applies to areas as shown on a copy of the
161 Official Shoreline Map in Appendix A.

162 **4.3.3.4 Management Policies**

163 In addition to the other applicable policies and regulations of this Program the following
164 management policies shall apply:

- 165 1. Uses that preserve the natural character of the area or promote preservation of
166 open space or critical areas either directly or over the long term should be the
167 primary allowed uses. Uses that result in restoration of shoreline ecological
168 functions should be allowed if the use is otherwise compatible with the purpose of
169 the Urban Conservancy shoreline designation and the setting.
- 170 2. Single-family residential development shall ensure no net loss of shoreline
171 ecological functions and preserve the existing character of the shoreline consistent
172 with the purpose of this designation.
- 173 3. Encourage regulations that limit lot coverage, provide adequate setbacks from the
174 shoreline, promote vegetation conservation, reduce the need for shoreline
175 stabilization and maintain or improve water quality to ensure no net loss of
176 shoreline ecological functions.
- 177 4. Public access and public recreation objectives should be implemented whenever
178 feasible and when significant ecological impacts can be mitigated.
- 179 5. Thinning or removal of vegetation should be limited to that necessary to:
- 180 a. remove noxious vegetation and invasive species;
- 181 b. provide physical or visual access to the shoreline; or
- 182 c. maintain or enhance an existing use consistent with critical areas protection
183 and maintenance or enhancement of shoreline ecological functions.
- 184 6. Public access and public recreation facilities are a preferred use if they will not
185 cause substantial ecological impacts and when restoration of ecological functions
186 is incorporated.
- 187 7. Low-intensity water-oriented commercial uses may be permitted if compatible
188 with surrounding uses.

189 **4.3.4 Medium Intensity Shoreline Designation**

190 **4.3.4.1 Purpose**

191 The purpose of the “Medium Intensity” shoreline designation is to accommodate
192 primarily residential development and appurtenant structures, but to also allow other
193 types of development that are consistent with this chapter. An additional purpose is to
194 provide appropriate public access and recreational uses.

195 **4.3.4.2 Designation Criteria**

196 The following criteria are used to consider a Medium Intensity shoreline:
197

- 198 1. The shoreline is located within incorporated municipalities and designated urban
199 growth areas;
- 200 2. The shoreline has low to moderate ecological function with low to moderate
201 opportunity for restoration;
- 202 3. The shoreline contains mostly residential development at urban densities and does
203 not contain resource industries (agriculture, forestry, mining);
204
- 205 4. The shoreline is planned or platted for residential uses in the comprehensive plan;
206 or
- 207 5. The shoreline has low to moderate potential for low-impact, passive or active
208 water-oriented recreation where ecological functions can be restored.

209 **4.3.4.3 Areas Designated**

210 The Medium Intensity shoreline designation applies to areas as shown on a copy of the
211 Official Shoreline Map in Appendix A.

212 **4.3.4.4 Management Policies**

213 In addition to the other applicable policies and regulations of this Program the following
214 management policies shall apply:
215

- 216 1. Encourage regulations that ensure no net loss of shoreline ecological functions as
217 a result of new development such as limiting lot coverage, providing adequate
218 setbacks from the shoreline, promoting vegetation conservation, reducing the
219 need for shoreline stabilization and maintaining or improving water quality to
220 ensure no net loss of ecological functions.
- 221 2. The scale and density of new uses and development should be compatible with
222 sustaining shoreline ecological functions and processes, and the existing
223 residential character of the area.
- 224 3. Public access and joint (rather than individual) use of recreational facilities should
225 be promoted.
- 226 4. Access, utilities, and public services to serve proposed development within
227 shorelines should be constructed outside shorelines to the extent feasible, and be
228 the minimum necessary to adequately serve existing needs and planned future
229 development.
- 230 5. Public or private outdoor recreation facilities should be provided with proposals
231 for subdivision development and encouraged with all shoreline development if
232 compatible with the character of the area. Priority should be given first to water-
233 dependent and then to water-enjoyment recreation facilities.
- 234 6. Commercial development should be limited to water-oriented uses. Non-water-
235 oriented commercial uses should only be allowed as part of mixed-use

236 developments where the primary use is residential and where there is a substantial
237 public benefit with respect to the goals and policies of this Program such as
238 providing public access or restoring degraded shorelines.

239 **4.3.5 High Intensity Shoreline Designation**

240 **4.3.5.1 Purpose**

241 The purpose of the “High Intensity” shoreline designation is to provide for high-intensity
242 water-oriented commercial, transportation, and industrial uses while protecting existing
243 shoreline ecological functions and restoring ecological functions in areas that have been
244 previously degraded.

245 **4.3.5.2 Designation Criteria**

246 The following criteria are used to consider a High Intensity shoreline designation:

- 247 1. The shoreline is located within incorporated municipalities and designated urban
248 growth areas;
- 249 2. The shoreline has low to moderate ecological function with low to moderate
250 opportunity for ecological restoration or preservation;
- 251 3. The shoreline contains mostly industrial, commercial, port facility, mixed-use, or
252 multi-family residential development at high urban densities and may contain
253 industries that are not designated agriculture, forestry, or mineral resource lands
254 in the comprehensive plan;
- 255 4. The shoreline may be or has been identified as part of a state or federal
256 environmental remediation program;
- 257 5. The shoreline is planned or platted for high intensity uses in the comprehensive
258 plan; or
- 259 6. The shoreline may support public passive or active water-oriented recreation
260 where ecological functions can be restored.

261 **4.3.5.3 Areas Designated**

262 The High Intensity shoreline designation applies to areas as shown on a copy of the
263 Official Shoreline Map in Appendix A.

264 **4.3.5.4 Management Policies**

265 In addition to the other applicable policies and regulations of this Program the following
266 management policies shall apply:

- 267 1. Encourage regulations that ensure no net loss of shoreline ecological functions as
268 a result of new development.

- 269 2. Promote infill and redevelopment in developed shoreline areas and encourage
270 environmental remediation and restoration of the shoreline, where applicable with
271 the goal of achieving full utilization of designated high-intensity shorelines.
- 272 3. Encourage the transition of uses from non-water-oriented to water-oriented uses.
- 273 4. Water-oriented uses are encouraged, however new non-water oriented uses may
274 be allowed if that use has limited access to the shoreline and when included in a
275 master plan or part of a mixed-use development.

276 **4.3.6 Rural Conservancy – Residential Shoreline Designation**

277 **4.3.6.1 Purpose**

278 The purpose of the “Rural Conservancy – Residential” shoreline designation is to protect
279 shoreline ecological functions, conserve existing natural resources and valuable historic
280 and cultural areas in order to provide for sustained resource use, achieve natural
281 floodplain processes, and provide recreational opportunities. Examples of uses that are
282 appropriate in a Rural Conservancy - Residential shoreline designation include low-
283 impact, passive recreation uses, water-oriented commercial development, and low-
284 intensity residential development.

285 **4.3.6.2 Designation Criteria**

286 The following criteria are used to consider a Rural Conservancy – Residential shoreline
287 designation:

- 288 1. The shoreline is located outside of incorporated municipalities and designated
289 urban growth areas;
- 290 2. The shoreline has moderate to high ecological function with moderate to high
291 opportunity for preservation and low to moderate opportunity for restoration or
292 low to moderate ecological function with moderate to high opportunity for
293 restoration;
- 294 3. The shoreline is not highly developed and most development is low-density
295 residential;
- 296 4. The shoreline is planned or platted Rural Center, Rural, or Master Planned Resort;
- 297 5. The shoreline has moderate to high potential for public, water-oriented recreation
298 where ecological functions can be maintained or restored; or
- 299 6. The shoreline has high scientific or educational value or unique historic or
300 cultural resources value.

301 **4.3.6.3 Areas Designated**

302 The Rural Conservancy – Residential shoreline designation applies to areas as shown on
303 a copy of the Official Shoreline Map in Appendix A.

304 **4.3.6.4 Management Policies**

305 In addition to the other applicable policies and regulations of this Program the following
306 management policies shall apply:

- 307 1. Uses in the Rural Conservancy – Residential shoreline designation should be
308 limited to those that sustain the shoreline area's physical and biological resources
309 and do not substantially degrade shoreline ecological functions or the rural or
310 natural character of the shoreline area.
- 311 2. Residential development shall ensure no net loss of shoreline ecological functions
312 and preserve the existing character of the shoreline consistent with the purpose of
313 this designation.
- 314 3. Encourage regulations that limit lot coverage, provide adequate setbacks from the
315 shoreline, promote vegetation conservation, reduce the need for shoreline
316 stabilization and maintain or improve water quality to ensure no net loss of
317 shoreline ecological functions.
- 318 4. Water-dependent and water-enjoyment recreation facilities that do not deplete the
319 resource over time are preferred uses, provided significant adverse impacts to the
320 shoreline are avoided and unavoidable impacts are minimized and mitigated.
- 321 5. Water-oriented commercial uses should be allowed in rural centers and Master
322 Planned Resorts only.
- 323 6. Developments and uses that would substantially degrade or permanently deplete
324 the biological resources of the area should not be allowed.

325 **4.3.7 Rural Conservancy – Resource Lands Shoreline Designation**

326 **4.3.7.1 Purpose**

327 The purpose of the “Rural Conservancy – Resource Lands” shoreline designation is to
328 protect shoreline ecological functions, conserve existing natural resources and valuable
329 historic and cultural areas in order to provide for sustained resource use, achieve natural
330 floodplain processes, and provide recreational opportunities. Examples of uses that are
331 appropriate in a Rural Conservancy – Resource Lands shoreline designation include low-
332 impact outdoor recreation uses, timber harvesting on a sustained-yield basis, agricultural
333 uses, and other natural resource-based uses.

334 **4.3.7.2 Designation Criteria**

335 The following criteria are used to consider a Rural Conservancy – Resource Lands
336 shoreline designation:

- 337 1. The shoreline is located outside of incorporated municipalities and designated
338 urban growth areas;
- 339 2. The shoreline has moderate to high ecological function with moderate to high
340 opportunity for preservation and low to moderate opportunity for restoration or
341 low to moderate ecological function with moderate to high opportunity for
342 restoration;
- 343 3. The shoreline is not highly developed, but consists primarily of resource
344 operations (agriculture, forestry, mining) and recreation, but may contain Master
345 Planned Resorts;
- 346 4. The shoreline is planned or platted Rural Industrial, Forest, Agriculture, Agri-
347 Wildlife, or has a surface mining overlay;
- 348 5. The shoreline has a moderate to high potential for low-intensity, passive water-
349 oriented recreation where resource industry-related safety concerns are minimal
350 or mitigated and ecological functions can be maintained or restored; or
- 351 6. The shoreline has moderate to high scientific or educational value or unique
352 historic or cultural resources value.

353 **4.3.7.3 Areas Designated**

354 The Rural Conservancy – Resource Lands shoreline designation applies to areas as
355 shown on a copy of the Official Shoreline Map in Appendix A.

356 **4.3.7.4 Management Policies**

357 In addition to the other applicable policies and regulations of this Program the following
358 management policies shall apply:

- 359 1. Agriculture, commercial forestry, and mining should be allowed in Rural
360 Conservancy – Resource Lands provided they are allowed in the underlying
361 zoning designation, and adverse impacts to the shoreline are avoided and
362 unavoidable impacts are minimized and mitigated.
- 363 2. Encourage regulations that ensure new shoreline uses, development, and activities
364 to sustain the shoreline area's physical and biological resources, do not
365 substantially degrade shoreline ecological functions or the rural or natural
366 character of the shoreline area, and achieve no net loss of shoreline ecological
367 functions.

- 368 3. Water-dependent and water-enjoyment recreation facilities that do not deplete the
369 resource over time are preferred uses, provided adverse impacts to the shoreline
370 are avoided and unavoidable impacts are minimized and mitigated.
- 371 4. Allow open space and recreational uses consistent with protection of shoreline
372 ecological functions and personal safety considerations.
- 373 5. Only water-oriented commercial uses that support permitted uses should be
374 allowed.
- 375 6. Residential development shall ensure no net loss of shoreline ecological functions
376 and preserve the existing character of the shoreline consistent with the purpose of
377 this designation.

378 **4.4 Official Shoreline Map**

379 **4.4.1 Map Established**

- 380 1. The location and extent of areas under the jurisdiction of this Program, and the
381 boundaries of various shoreline designations affecting the lands and water of the
382 County shall be as shown on the map entitled, “Official Shoreline Map, Clark
383 County, Washington.” The official shoreline map and all the notations,
384 references, amendments, and other information shown on the map are hereby
385 made a part of this Program, as if such information set forth on the map were fully
386 described herein.
- 387 2. In the event that new shoreline areas are discovered (including but not limited to,
388 associated wetlands) that are not mapped and/or designated on the official
389 shoreline map, these areas are automatically assigned an Urban Conservancy
390 designation for lands within cities and urban growth areas, or Rural Conservancy
391 – Residential if on lands outside urban growth areas until the shoreline can be re-
392 designated through a Program amendment.
- 393 3. In the event of a mapping error, the county will rely upon common boundary
394 descriptions and the criteria contained in RCW 90.58.030(2) and WAC 173-22
395 pertaining to determinations of shorelands, as amended, rather than the incorrect
396 or outdated map.

397 **4.4.2 File Copies**

398 The Official Shoreline Map will be recorded with the Clark County Auditor’s office and
399 kept in electronic format at the office of the Clark County Department of GIS and at
400 Ecology. Unofficial copies of the map may be prepared for administrative purposes. To
401 facilitate use of this Program an “unofficial copy” has been attached as Appendix A.

402 **4.4.3 Map Amendments**

403 The Official Shoreline Map is an integral part of this Program and may not be amended
404 except upon approval by the County and Ecology, as provided under the Act.

405 **4.4.4 Boundary Interpretation**

406 If disagreement develops as to the exact location of a shoreline designation boundary line
407 shown on the Official Shoreline Map, the following rules shall apply:

- 408 1. Boundaries indicated as approximately following lot, tract, or section lines shall
409 be so construed;
- 410 2. Boundaries indicated as approximately following roads or railways shall be
411 respectively construed to follow their centerlines;
- 412 3. Boundaries indicated as approximately parallel to or extensions of features
413 indicated in (1) or (2) above shall be so construed.
- 414 4. Whenever existing physical features are inconsistent with boundaries on the
415 Official Shoreline Map, the Shoreline Administrator shall interpret the boundaries
416 with deference to actual conditions. Appeals of such interpretation may be filed
417 according to the applicable appeal procedures described in Chapter 7,
418 Administration and Enforcement.

419 **4.4.5 Shoreline Designation Changes and Urban Growth Boundary**
420 **Revisions**

421 When a portion of shoreline jurisdiction is brought into or removed from an urban growth
422 area, a new shoreline designation may need to be assigned. Shoreline designations shall
423 be assigned in accordance with Table 4-1, Shoreline Designations for Urban/Rural
424 Boundary Revisions. Where more than one designation could be appropriate according to
425 Table 4-1, the shoreline designation criteria in this chapter shall be applied and the best-
426 fitting shoreline designation assigned. Shoreline designation assignments shall occur
427 concurrently with the annexation or other legislative action to remove a portion of
428 shoreline jurisdiction from a city or urban growth area and to amend the shoreline map
429 and shall be effective upon approval by Ecology (see Section 4.4.3).

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Table 4-1. Shoreline Designations for Urban¹/Rural² Boundary Revisions		
SENDING Jurisdiction Shoreline Designation	Transfer From/To	RECEIVING Jurisdiction Shoreline Designation(s)
Aquatic	Rural/Urban Urban/Rural	Aquatic Aquatic
Natural	Rural/Urban Urban/Rural	Natural Natural
Rural Conservancy – Residential	Rural/Urban	Urban Conservancy Medium Intensity
Rural Conservancy – Resource Lands	Rural/Urban	Urban Conservancy Medium Intensity High Intensity
Urban Conservancy	Urban/Rural	Rural Conservancy – Residential Rural Conservancy – Resource Lands
Medium Intensity	Urban/Rural	Rural Conservancy – Residential
High Intensity	Urban/Rural	Rural Conservancy – Resource Lands

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436

¹Urban = City or Urban Growth Area

²Rural = Unincorporated Clark County outside Urban Growth Areas