

ZONING AND LAND USE

Regulations Related to Transmission Lines

Abstract

The Bellevue portion of PSE's Talbot Hill/Lakeside Transmission Line Project is located predominantly in land use districts zoned residential. In fact, even considering variations in the criteria for determining land use designations, the conclusion is that the predominant land use along the proposed transmission corridor is residential. The proposed PSE project would have a significant impact on residential neighborhoods and homeowners, not only aesthetically but financially. PSE's proposal conflicts with city land use codes which were enacted to protect the intended character of residential neighborhoods.

Table of Contents

1. Description of the Corridor as Currently Zoned
2. Impact on Property Values
3. Land Use Policies in Bellevue
4. Conclusion
5. Appendix: Data Source and Methodology and Zoning Maps

1. Description of the Corridor as Currently Zoned

King County Assessor data, as reported in the FEIS, show the predominance of single-and-multi-family residential land use in the zones proposed for PSE'S 230kV transmission line. Based on a linear-foot breakdown of the study area for the project's alignment from Redmond to Renton, the most common existing land uses are:

- Residential (single-family and multi-family): 49 percent
- Vacant land (which includes portions of public parks): 17 percent
- Industrial: 9 percent
- Institutional: 9 percent¹

¹ http://www.energizeeastsideeis.org/uploads/4/7/3/1/47314045/chapter_4.1_land_use_and_housing.pdf page 3

Table 1 represents data from the King County parcel database which is tabulated from the *Proposed Powerline Feet by Present Land Use of Parcel* report. The report documents the following parcels and their use as designated for assessment.²

- Single-family residential: 256
- Condominium: 8
- Apartment: 5
- Single family (C/1 zone): 2
- TOTAL: 273

The 330 land use parcels counted in this tabulation are *specifically* for parcels that are crossed by the transmission line. The parcel database field that was used to tabulate land use was called “PRESENTUSE,” and is derived from King County assessor’s data.

Table 1
Present-Use Parcels Crossed by Proposed Transmission Line

Present Use	Count Parcels	EE Length
Single family (residential use / zone)	256	38,773
School (Public)	5	4,889
Utility, Public	7	4,575
Golf Course	1	3,922
Condominium (Residential)	8	3,791
Park, Public (Zoo\ Arboretum)	4	3,728
Open Space (Curr. Use-RCW/84.34)	6	3,232
Unknown	8	3,191
Mortuary / Cemetery / Crematory	2	2,943
Right of Way / Utility, Road	3	2,183
Apartment	5	1,937
Industrial Park	4	1,778
Warehouse	2	1,551
Office building	4	1,284
Sport Facility	2	723
Single family (C/1 Zone)	2	498
Retail store	4	472
Auto Showroom and Lot	1	454
Shopping Center (Neighborhood)	1	309
Church / Welfare / Religious Service	2	247
Open Space Timber Land / Greenbel	1	241
Club	1	134
Easement	1	12
Total	330	78,794
<i>Miles</i>		<i>14.9</i>

Residential parcels represent the most common land use of properties located under the route of the proposed transmission line.

² https://www5.kingcounty.gov/sdc/FGDCDocs/KCA102_PRESENTUSE_PARCEL_faqs.htm

2. Impact on Property Values

The proposed PSE project would have long term impacts on neighborhoods and immediate impacts on homeowners. The current 115 kV line with H-frame structures has been incorporated into landscape plans and shielded from view with mature trees. Construction that includes a "clear zone" on properties for removal of the wooden poles and digging of holes for steel pole placement would have a significant impact on homeowners' property.

The steel poles proposed are 90-130 feet high and between 3-5 feet in diameter at the base. The height of these poles would impact view shed, and aesthetically degrade and obstruct scenic views for residents within 2 or more miles.

The removal of all mature landscaping would decrease property values, not only for the homeowner, but for neighboring properties.

The results reported in Bottemiller & Wolverton "Price Effects of HVTL's on Abutting Homes" from *The Appraisal Journal*, state that this study included the Seattle higher-priced home market and showed that "the effect of abutting a HVTL (high voltage transmission line) right-of-way was a much greater percentage of price and the effect was more significant than for the data as a whole."³ This correlates to property values along the Eastside proposed transmission corridor

Another study, reviewed for the *Journal of Real Estate Research*, reports that *vacant lots* adjacent to high-voltage transmission lines sell for 45 percent less than equivalent lots *not* located near transmission lines. Even non-adjacent lots located within 1,000 feet of a transmission line sell at a discount of 18 percent. Assuming that land represents 20 percent of a home's overall value, the 45 percent decrease translates to a drop in total property value of about 9 percent.⁴

In the FEIS, a comparison of similar properties shows a variation in price per square foot between high- and-low degrees of power line impacts range from a high of an 87 percent in land value in Renton to a low of a 12 percent decrease in land values in Kirkland.⁵

The *Economic Considerations Report* acknowledges that property value is negatively impacted when large transmission lines obstruct views and positively impacted when transmission lines are underground, and views are improved.⁶

³ https://www.bpa.gov/Projects/Projects/I-5/2012documents/Article_PriceEffectsOfHighVoltageLines_March2013.pdf
page 56

⁴ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-electrifying-factor-affecting-your-property-s-value-1534343506>

⁵ http://www.energizeeastsideeis.org/uploads/4/7/3/1/47314045/pse_ee_economics_v5_final_160122.pdf
page 14-15.

⁶ http://www.energizeeastsideeis.org/uploads/4/7/3/1/47314045/fcs_group_economic_considerations_010417.pdf
page 3.

King County assessors would lower assessed values to account for negative influences such as obstruction of a view (which primarily affect residential properties not commercial/industrial properties), residential land being used for a public utility or an undesirable land use being "zoned" adjacent to a property.⁷

Not only would Eastside residents see their property values decrease, they would also see their utility bills increase. In fact, all residents in the PSE service area would see an increase in their utility bills because of the proposed project.¹

The City of Bellevue would benefit from increased *sales tax* revenues based on the costs of project construction, *Ad Valorem tax*, *property tax* revenues based on the construction of PSE assets, *real estate transfer tax* revenues based on land transactions by PSE and Energize Eastside permit fees.⁸ This is acknowledged in the FEIS.

Why should residentially-zoned land-use districts disproportionately shoulder the financial burden of decreased property values and higher utility bills, when the expressed "need" for this project is "growth" in the commercial zones of Bellevue? The land use codes stipulate that an electrical facility location be a consequence of the needs of the customers located in that area.

The expressed "need" for Energize Eastside is not about need in the residential land use districts. Nor will these residential areas profit from the taxes mentioned above. If there is a concern about electrical reliability in the commercial land-use districts in the City of Bellevue, alternatives are available that could be located near the need, rather than in residential districts.

3. Land Use Policies in Bellevue

The *City of Bellevue* has established a "location selection hierarchy" that prefers nonresidential areas for locating a new or expanded electrical utility facility. **LUC20.20.255** also requires that an electrical utility facility location be a consequence of the needs and demands from customers located within that area. Further, that residential land use districts be avoided when a new or expanded electrical utility facility serves a nonresidential land use district. The "need" expressed for this project by PSE is in downtown Bellevue, not in these residential areas. **CUP20.30.140** requires a (utility) design be compatible with and respond to the existing character, appearance and physical characteristics of the property. The majority of residential properties along the corridor have well maintained landscaping, in neighborhoods supported by covenants, in an area with excellent schools and parks. PSE's Talbot Hill/Lakeside Transmission Line Project is definitely not compatible with the Eastside residential zones.

⁷ http://www.energizeeastsideeis.org/uploads/4/7/3/1/47314045/pse_ee_economics_v5_final_160122.pdf
page 7 and page 9

⁸ http://www.energizeeastsideeis.org/uploads/4/7/3/1/47314045/pse_ee_economics_v5_final_160122.pdf page 9.

4. Conclusion

Once the 230kV transmission poles are built there will be no going back. The damage will be done to homeowner properties and to residential neighborhoods along the corridor. Nor should this financial burden be placed on the homeowners. With the aesthetics of neighborhoods permanently altered, this proposal will also change the dynamics of cities. The relevant land use codes and policies of the cities involved should be respected and followed. Denying this proposal will preserve the intended character of residential land use zones along the Eastside.

5. Appendix

Data Source and Methodology and Maps

Source for Data

Data Element	Source File/Variable	Source Organization
Parcel PRESENTUSE code.	PARCEL_ADDRESS	ftp://ftp.kingcounty.gov/gis-web/GISData/landuse_kc_consol_20_SHP.zip
Powerline (map layer)	Manually digitized*	CENSE

A description for the parcel present use code is provided here at the following URL:
https://www5.kingcounty.gov/sdc/FGDCDocs/KCA102_PRESENTUSE_PARCEL_faq.htm

* Spatial data is not available from PSE for the proposed power line, so CENSE digitized its route based on the existing route as determined by aerial imagery and proximity to parcel boundaries, as well as other published non-spatial data from PSE (the Environmental Impact Statement, permit applications, etc.

Source for Maps

Data Element	Source File/Variable	Source Organization
Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designations for King County - 20 Categories	LANDUSE_KC_CONSOL_20	ftp://ftp.kingcounty.gov/gis-web/GISData/landuse_kc_consol_20_SHP.zip
Powerline (map layer)	Manually digitized*	CENSE

Existing Transmission Corridor through Predominantly Residential Land Use Zones

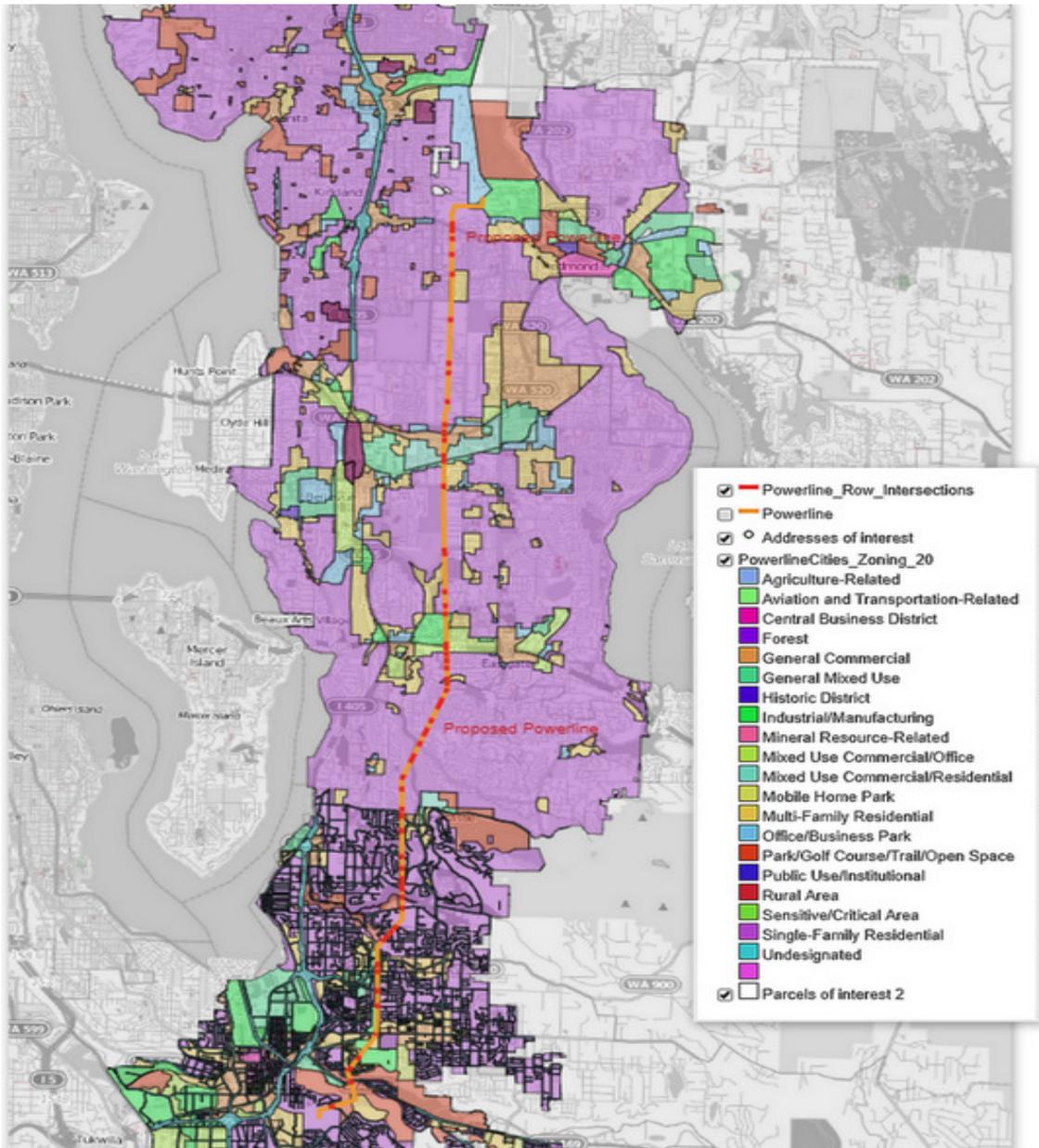


Figure 1 The route of the existing 115kV transmission corridor, from Redmond to Renton, illustrating the dominate land-use district as Single-Family Residential. (Map and data provided by Deron Ferguson)

Transmission Line Route through South Bellevue Land Use Districts

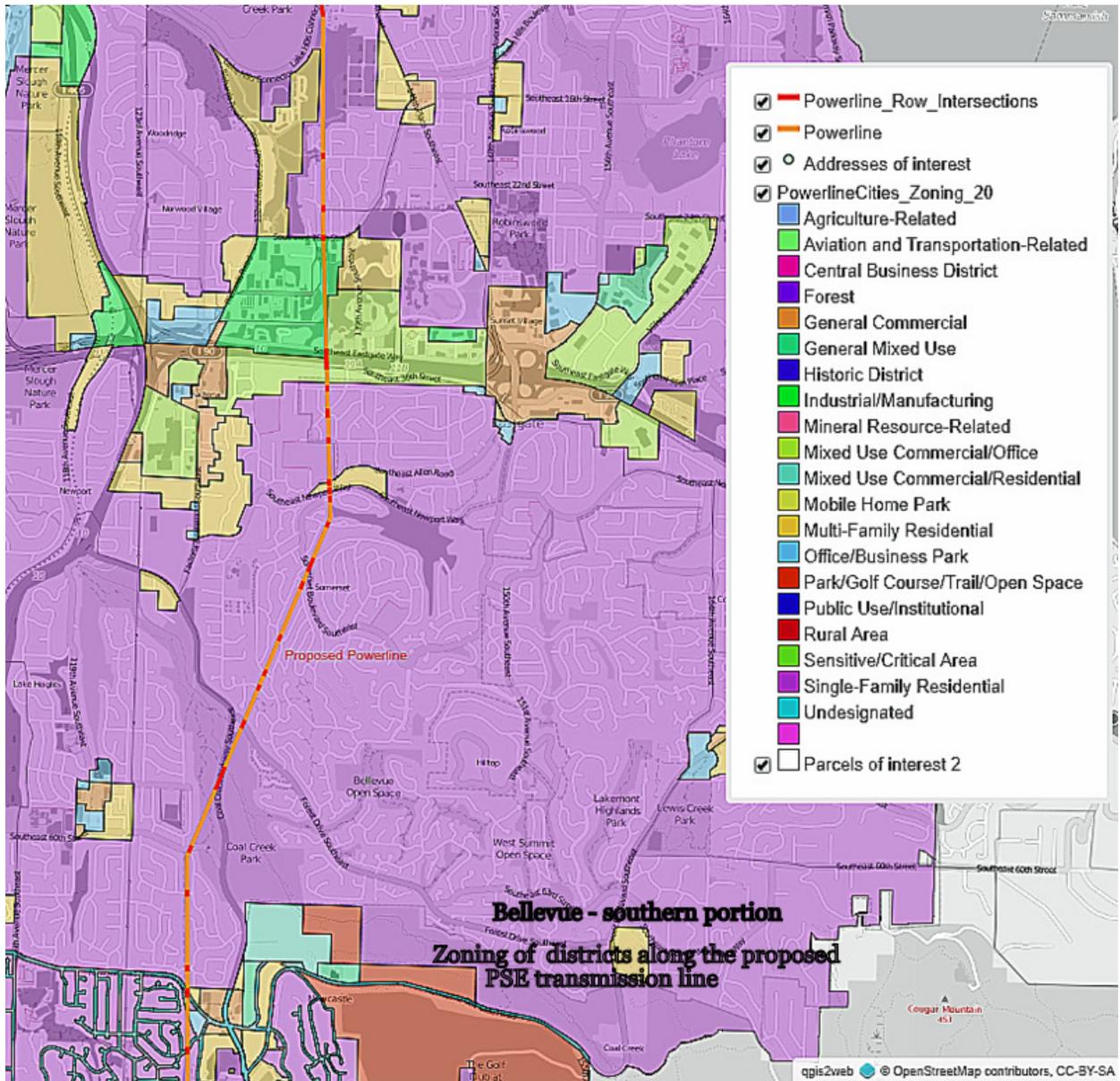


Figure 2 The route of the existing 115kV transmission corridor through South Bellevue Land Use Districts