

Place Assessment: Red Barn Ranch

Prepared by Headwater People Consulting 5/27/22

What do we know so far?

- The 40-acre Red Barn Ranch is in rural King County, southeast of Auburn. The site was originally developed as a youth camp and included a dormitory, swimming pool, horse-back-riding corrals, tennis courts and other buildings in support of the youth camp. Based on the record drawings received and nameplate information on the main electrical gear, most of the site was developed in the early 1970s. The site is located within unincorporated King County and falls within an **Agricultural Production District (APD)**.
 - 1. Establishing residential density limits to retain lots sized for efficient farming.
 - 2. Allowing for uses related to agricultural production and limiting nonagricultural uses to those compatible with farming, or requiring close proximity for the support of agriculture; and
 - 3. Allowing for residential development primarily to house farm owners, on-site agricultural employees and their respective families.
- Yet the existing buildings were built before the current redistricting and do not fall under the APD, the land however does.
- The city of Auburn used redlining tactics to block Black/ African American people from renting, leasing, or owning land or property. The city of Seattle also practiced this, which intentionally divided neighborhoods and created barriers for education, employment, services and outdoor recreation for Black people. The red barn ranch is in unincorporated King County and operated as a farm in the 1940s.
- The parcel was sold in 1966 to Elgin Baylor, along with the Seattle SuperSonics who advocated to develop the Red Barn Ranch to be used as a youth sports camp (Additional context in appendix). There is an important story here of Black property ownership in service for Black youth. The documentation is limited about the ownership and activities during this time, and it still is a story shared across the city.
- In the 1970s the City of Seattle purchased the parcel using a state funded grant. The Red Barn property was utilized as a summer youth camp for several years until 1982. Within that time, it was used as a Model Cities program which was funded and staffed by the city until 1974.
- The Red Barn Ranch was opened and closed many times but ultimately served different occupants and visions, from field trips, weddings, religious group conferences, interactive farming experiences, and Seattle tilth community.
- An [architecture and landscape assessment](#) was conducted by Osborn Architects, Inc. in 2021, and it shares detailed information about the costs to renovate or remove existing structures on the parcel.

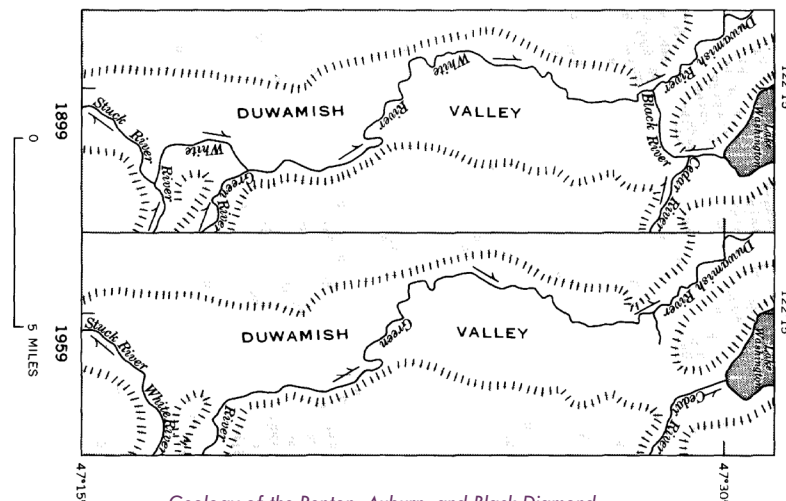
Coast Salish use of the land:

- While visiting the Red Barn Ranch it was apparent that the parcel had human pruned groves of trees surrounding the 40 acres, a mix of evergreens and deciduous protecting the grasslands that once herded cattle and other livestock as the Red Barn Ranch. Little is known about the usage of the plot to historic Coast Salish people, but it can be inferred



that due to the Red Barn Ranch Parcel's proximity to the Green River, the land was used as an easy harvesting spot while debarking a canoe. Harvesting here could be but not limited to Red Cedar Bark for weaving or regalia.

- Though we cannot be certain that a longhouse settlement was directly on the Red Barn Ranch, there were villages alongside the Green River. These bands were the Skwophahbsh or the people of fluctuating river.
- The sweeping views of Tahoma are apparent while looking southeast on a clear day. Not only does Tahoma serve as a spiritual relationship for the Muckleshoot tribe in the area, but Tahoma also feeds many of the rivers and tributaries with an abundance of clean glacierized water. Historically, Tahoma used to lend water through the Green River, however, when the White River majorly flooded the area in 1906, farmers demanded that the White River be diverted into the Stuck River that spilled into the Puyallup estuaries.



[Geology of the Renton, Auburn, and Black Diamond Quadrangles, King County, Washington.](#) (United State Government Printing Office, Washington: 1970)

Interviews

- Chris Iberle, Strategic Advisor, Office of Sustainability & Environment
 - Chris gave the run-down of the previous programs that have occupied the Red Barn Ranch in the past. He was mainly familiar with the Seattle Tilth that used the area for 3 years with Camp Berachah then independently from 2014-2018. Chris noted that the area was quite unforgiving for growing crops due to the hard and rocky soil underneath the grassy lands.
- Matthew McDermott, Alluvial Farms
 - Matthew had worked at the Tilth Alliance while they operated on the Red Barn Ranch. He also lived on-site in the largest building for three years. Matthew noted the wonderful people and groups he helped start their farms at the Red Barn Ranch. There were about 20 groups of refugees and immigrants of color that used the parcel to farm and cultivate various foods. However, it didn't work as planned and the USDA funding ran out, thus Tilth left the Red Barn Ranch. Most importantly, Matthew reaffirmed that the parcel is covered in rocks and is extremely hard to grow perennials like vegetables. It was possible to do smaller harvests of fruit



from trees, livestock, or even mushroom cultivation but tiling the soil was nearly impossible. Lastly, Matthew stressed the importance of re-welling; the well that is on the property only pumps out 10 gallons a minute. Which to his knowledge and experience left him to watering a couple acres at a time. He suggested that a new well be drilled.

- Valerie Segrest, Muckleshoot Knowledge Keeper
 - Headwater People walked around the Red Barn Ranch with Valerie in March 2022. She noted the plants around the property and suggested to keep Flaming Geyser State Park and the Muckleshoot owned Keta Creek Salmon Hatchery which connects to the Green River in mind.
- Nyema Clark, Director of Nurturing Roots
 - Nyema and Nurturing Roots have been looking at the Red Barn Ranch property for a while now. They recognize and share the significance of the almost 40 acres that the Red Barn Ranch holds. They dream to have a space where everyone can come together and share the love of the land while advancing equitable futures for Black people. They acknowledge that this is a painful process and takes the care of all communities to move forward.

Additional Information

Comprehensive Plan for The Red Barn Ranch, Hobbs/Fukui Associates, July 1971

- The soil at the site is composed of glacial drift and is extremely hard and rocky. The density of the soil provides excellent bearing capacity for wood frame structures
- The Red Barn Ranch retains a feeling of natural containment, regardless of what occurs on adjacent property.
- Ascertain if additional land usage such as animal grazing or crop growing is feasible.



Appendix

Sources: Schwab/Krause family
and King County Engineer

The soil is composed of drift deposited by the Vashon Ice Sheet 50,000 years ago and is extremely dense (hard) and rocky. This soil condition combined with the flatness of the slope on this site tends to encourage ponding and marsh areas. The area was a forest in character composed of Douglas fir, cedar, pine and maple, with typical Northwest ground cover of ferns, mosses, etc.

The original Federal Land Survey came through here in 1856, and a section corner happened to lie within this site. In 1910 the area was divided into 40-acre tracts, of which this was one. About this time the area was logged for the Moneysmith Mill located on the shore of the (Moneysmith) lake. Eight families settled nearby as logger/mill hands; then clearing the land of stumps and developing never-ending piles of rocks, such as the one in the southeast corner of the Ranch. The valley became cattle and chicken ranches.

Moneysmith Road originated as a forest trail that became a horse trail which the ranchers soon developed into a wagon road and built fences alongside to contain their livestock. The road became part of the county system and designated as Road #212; it was paved on its existing route and the watermain located alongside (the ranch spring was diverted into a ditch and the well capped for later use of irrigation and livestock).

Raising livestock and dairy farming was the most successful venture in this rocky valley and the Red Barn Ranch was so developed in 1949 with a barn, chicken hutches and a farmhouse, plus the necessary silo for converting fodder into cattle feed by fermentation. In 1960 the Ranch was sold to Dr. Singer of Tacoma who added the building now used as a bunkhouse, rebuilt the barn and two-story farmhouse, for the intended use as a convalescent home for his patients. But the doctor's plans were cut short by a fatal heart attack, and in 1966 his widow, Vera Singer, sold the site to Recreation Services, Inc. for development as a sports camp by Elgin Baylor and the Sonics basketball team. They added the swimming pool, four basketball courts, and a large kitchen in the bunkhouse, and drilled the 90' well.

The Seattle School District, the Model City Program, and the Park Department joined resources in an effort to find a site suitable for outdoor education. Several site potentials were inventoried: Red Barn Ranch was proposed by MCP and, with the backing of the Mayor's Office, became the selected site. Negotiations for a lease began, but a fire caused considerable damage to the upper floor of the bunkhouse, and the program had to be restructured for day camping only during 1969. MCP with State and Federal aid bought the Ranch, adding a dining room to the repaired bunkhouse and four classrooms in the Red Barn. But a severe windstorm revealed a structural weakness in the barn, so it was condemned in 1971. (And so, the "Red Barn" banished!). Although (Seattle) communities were opposed, MCP completed the project - the Silo became the only feature remaining of the original ranch; improvements included a new dining hall, new staff bunkhouse and a Director's residence, a new orchard, parking lot, storage building, corral, bridle trail, a new amphitheatre replaced one basketball court, and another court was converted to tennis. The new design by architects Hobbs/Fukui won an AIA Honor Award in 1973.

History: RED BARN RANCH
11/8/74

