HIGHEST AND BEST USE

Address withheld, Milton, WA

Parcel withheld · City of Milton, Pierce County · Prepared Nov 2026 · sample report

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Our opinion: the route that builds the most on this lot is a short plat into two lots, each then built out toward Milton's three-dwelling-unit-per-lot cap over time (keeping the existing house plus two accessory dwelling units on one lot; a new house plus two accessory dwelling units on the other). That is five homes added, more than any single-lot route can reach, because Milton's own per-lot cap (MMC 17.15A.010) cannot be stacked on one lot but resets on each lot a split creates. It is ranked first here because the state's and the city's own rules name both the split and the per-lot ADU count; it is still conditional, for the same reason the main report gives: a geotechnical and boundary survey has not yet fixed how much of this steep lot is clear of Milton's landslide-hazard rule, and the city has yet to confirm in writing whether a lot only partly within that hazard can be created at all. If either comes back unfavorable, the single-lot routes below (keep the house and add two accessory units) become the best use instead.

Ranked routes

RANK	ROUTE	ALLOWED	HOMES ADDED	HOMES AFTER	LIVING SPACE ADDED	BINDING LIMIT	PERMIT PATH	COST RANGE	CITE
1	Short plat into two lots, each built to its own 3-unit NR1 cap	Conditional	5	6	Up to roughly 5,100 sq ft (two new 1,000 sq ft ADUs plus a new house and a kept house, each sized to the clear buildable strip)	The landslide-hazard buffer and the lot's frontage width, both discussed in the main report	Short plat: administrative, Process Type I (MMC 16.28.200). Each dwelling unit after: administrative, Process Type I (MMC 17.44.160(D))	$17,000-$38,300 for the split itself (see the main report); construction on each resulting lot priced below, roughly $350-$700/sf for new detached construction	MMC 16.08.074, 16.28.200 (Ord. 2116-25); MMC 17.15A.010 note 1; RCW 36.70A.681(1)(c)
2	Keep the house, add two accessory dwelling units on the single lot	Conditional	2	3	Up to 2,000 sq ft (two ADUs at the 1,000 sq ft cap each, if the clear buildable strip is deep enough)	MMC 17.20.030's rule that an accessory structure sit behind the house, the 25-ft ADU rear setback, and the same landslide-hazard buffer	Administrative, Process Type I, per ADU (MMC 17.44.160(D))	Construction $350-$700/sf (new detached), $300-$450/sf (attached); two units at the low/average/high of that range: $350/$488/$700 per sf blended, roughly $700,000 low to $1,400,000 high for 2,000 sq ft, average about $976,000 -- far beyond what the small clear strip of this lot could physically hold, so the realistic build is much smaller than the 1,000 sq ft cap allows; size, not cost, is what actually binds here	RCW 36.70A.681(1)(c); MMC 17.44.160

RANK	ROUTE	ALLOWED	HOMES ADDED	HOMES AFTER	LIVING SPACE ADDED	BINDING LIMIT	PERMIT PATH	COST RANGE	CITE
3	Remove the existing house, rebuild to the 3-unit NR1 cap	Conditional	2	3	Comparable to Route 2; a rebuild can use the clear strip more efficiently than retrofitting around the existing 1978 house, but does not raise the unit ceiling	Same landslide-hazard buffer; demolition of a structure with no confirmed asbestos survey	Administrative for each unit, but demolition adds its own permit and notice step	Same per-sf range as Route 2	MMC 17.15A.010 note 1
4	Remodel or add on to the existing house, no new unit	Allowed	0	1	A modest addition only, limited by the same buffer and by the about 1,200 sq ft house's own footprint	None beyond ordinary building and critical-area review	Administrative building permit	Not priced; no unit is proposed and the customer did not ask about this route	MMC 17.15B.010 (ordinary setbacks apply; no special rule)

No route was found flatly **not allowed** under NR1 for this lot; every route above turns on the same slope/critical-area question, not on a zoning use prohibition.

The top route: short plat into two lots, built out to each lot's cap

Maximum envelope. Feasa's buildable-area calculation, run against the lot's digitized outline with NR1's setbacks (front 20 ft, rear 25 ft, side 7.5 ft each), returns about 39,000 sq ft of usable area before any critical-area reduction, out of a about 51,000 sq ft digitized lot (its largest clear rectangle: about 123 ft by 257 ft, centered on the lot). That zoning-only figure overstates what is actually buildable here: Milton's landslide-hazard buffer (height of the slope, or 50 ft, whichever is larger, plus a 15-ft structural setback, MMC 18.16.530(B)(1)(a) and 18.16.190) falls across the rear two-thirds of this specific lot, leaving an estimated 15% to 35% of the lot's total area clear, concentrated in a strip near the street. That estimate is not a tool output; it comes from comparing this lot's own measured topography (elevation 131 to 217 ft, 86 ft of relief) against the buffer rule, and only a licensed geotechnical and survey delineation can fix the real line.

Massing. Within that clear strip, Milton caps any one building at 3,000 sq ft of footprint and any one ADU at 1,000 sq ft of gross floor area, 24 ft tall (35 ft if built over a garage to the principal dwelling's height). Two ADUs per lot plus the existing or a new house is the ceiling on each of the two lots this route would create.

Permit path and cost. The split itself: administrative short plat, no public hearing, $17,000 to $38,300 all-in through a filed application (see The numbers in the main report). Each added dwelling unit after that: a separate administrative Process Type I building permit, no hearing. Construction cost for any new detached unit in Washington State runs $350 to $700 per square foot, averaging around $488 per square foot, blended from two statewide market sources (see Sources); for an attached unit, roughly $300 to $450 per square foot. These are market rates, not quotes, and are shown for information only; they do not change the ranking above, which turns on homes and living space added, not cost.

Next steps. The same two steps that open the main report's What it takes: a geotechnical/boundary survey to fix the buildable line, and Milton Community Development's written answer on the partial-hazard subdivision question and on how lot width is measured for a flag lot.

The next two routes

Keep the house, add two ADUs (Route 2). This is the fallback if the split cannot clear the hazard or width questions: Milton's own ADU count (two per lot, MMC 17.44.160(E)(1)) already matches the state's HB 1337 floor of at least two accessory dwellings per lot (RCW 36.70A.681(1)(c)), with no owner-occupancy requirement and a 1,000 sq ft cap per unit. The real limit on this lot is the same slope buffer: MMC 17.20.030 also requires any detached accessory structure to sit behind the principal dwelling, and on this lot's narrow clear strip there may not be room for the house, its own yard, and two full-size ADUs together without the same survey.

Scrape and rebuild (Route 3). Removing the 1978 house and building new within the clear strip reaches the same 3-unit ceiling as Route 2, with more design freedom but an added demolition step (and, since no asbestos survey is on file for a 1978 structure, likely an asbestos survey before any demolition permit).

Not allowed

No route tested here is barred outright by a zoning use table or a cited code section; see Ranked routes above for why each is marked allowed or conditional instead.

CONDITIONAL GO

Sources

Property, parcel & tax records

- GIS parcel, topography and critical-area layers, Pierce County, retrieved 2026-11-11; Feasa's buildable-area calculation run against the digitized outline with NR1's setbacks, 2026-11-11

Fees & costs

- ADU Construction Costs in Washington State (2026), retrieved 2026-11-11
- How Much Does an ADU Cost in Washington? (2026), retrieved 2026-11-11

Zoning & land use

- City of Milton Municipal Code, Title 16 (Subdivisions), Ordinance 2116-25, retrieved 2026-11-11
- City of Milton Municipal Code, Title 17 (Zoning)
- RCW 36.70A.681 (accessory dwelling units), retrieved 2026-11-11
- RCW 58.17.060 (short subdivisions), retrieved 2026-11-11

Preliminary feasibility study prepared by Feasa for the person who ordered it. All budget figures are preliminary estimates, not quotes. Facts are tagged verified / inferred / unknown with their sources; verify anything marked unknown before committing money. This is not a survey, a legal opinion, an engineering report, or an appraisal.