



#### COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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### **DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

Michael Welter Director

## **Thurston County Comprehensive Plan AMENDMENT FACT SHEET** *(Updated November 2007)*

### **THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Comprehensive plans guide Thurston County's physical development and identify what transportation and other public facilities are needed to meet the needs of population growth. These plans are the framework for zoning and other development regulations, which must be consistent with comprehensive plans.

### **ADDITIONAL PLAN DOCUMENTS**

Several comprehensive plans guide development of lands in unincorporated parts of Thurston County. The Thurston County Comprehensive Plan deals mainly with rural areas of the County (land outside of urban growth areas that surround cities). The County also has subarea Plans for the communities of the Nisqually Valley, Rochester and Grand Mound. Joint plans with the cities guide the land use in the unincorporated county areas between city limits and urban growth area boundaries. There are seven joint plans in Thurston County for the urban growth areas around Bucoda, Olympia, Lacey, Tumwater, Yelm, Tenino, and Rainier. These joint plans are jointly adopted by both the applicable city and Thurston County.

### **PLAN DOCUMENTS AMENDMENT PROCESS**

Any of these documents can be amended through the County's Comprehensive Plan amendment process. Each joint plan or subarea plan covers a different area, but the Thurston County Comprehensive Plan covers all unincorporated areas and includes, by reference, all of the separate plan documents. Plans are routinely updated for

compliance with the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA).

### **AMENDMENTS CONSIDERED ONCE PER YEAR**

By state law, city and county comprehensive plans may be amended no more than once a year, except for emergencies, initial subarea plan adoptions, and for amendments related to a GMA compliance order (RCW 36.70A.130). This allows amendments to each plan to be considered at the same time so that their cumulative effects can be evaluated. Each year, proposed amendments are listed on a Docket and made available for public review.

### **THE AMENDMENT PROCESS**

Proposals to change the Comprehensive Plan can come from a variety of sources. Property owners may suggest a **site-specific** change, such as a rezone, by filing a “quasi-judicial” comprehensive plan amendment application with the Development Services Department. Application packets are available at the Permit Assistance Center at the Thurston County Courthouse or on the Development Services web page. A fee is required. The deadline for citizen proposals is the fifteenth of November each year. Proposals for **legislative** changes, changes affecting a large area of the county or plan policies, or changes to an Urban Growth Area boundary can be suggested by filling out a plan amendment form, also available at the Permit Assistance Center. No fee is required for legislative suggestions, but only a city council or the Board of County Commissioners may place a legislative change on the Docket. The Board of County Commissioners chooses proposals to create the Official Docket once per year for further action.

Proposals chosen for action are reviewed by County staff, the Thurston County Planning Commission, the planning commissions of affected cities (for joint plan amendments), the public, city councils (which make the decisions for cities on joint plan amendments) and the Board of County Commissioners. The Board of Commissioners makes the final decisions for the County’s plan and the unincorporated portions of joint plans.

The public may comment on amendment proposals by attending public hearings or by submitting comments in writing prior to the hearings.

### **HOW TO PARTICIPATE**

~ CALL THE COUNTY FOR MORE INFORMATION:

County staff will be glad to tell you about the proposed amendments and the process for commenting. You may pick up written material about the proposed amendments at the Permit Assistance Center (2nd floor, Building 1, 2000 Lakeridge Drive SW, Olympia). Contact Thurston County Development

Services main line at (360) 786-5490 or Associate Planner Aimee Swenson-Farrow at (360) 709-3005, e-mail [swensoa@co.thurston.wa.us](mailto:swensoa@co.thurston.wa.us). The County's TDD line for the hearing impaired is (360) 754-2933.

~ COUNTY STAFF WILL COME TO A MEETING OF YOUR GROUP:

County staff is available to come to a meeting of your neighborhood association or civic group to explain any amendments you are interested in, the process the amendments go through to be considered for adoption, and how members of the public can participate in that process.

~ TWO SETS OF HEARINGS ARE HELD:

The first public hearing is before the Thurston County Planning Commission. The second hearing is held by the Board of County Commissioners. The Board makes the final decision. For amendments to County-City joint plans, hearings are also held by the city's planning commission and usually the City Council. Testimony and letters on proposed amendments to the plans for unincorporated urban growth areas will be shared with both the City and County reviewing bodies.

~ PREPARE FOR THE PUBLIC HEARINGS:

Call County staff to get more information and to receive written material on the amendments. Prior to the first public hearing on amendment proposals, the County will prepare information for each amendment, including a summary description, rationale for the change, the effect of the change, the review process schedule, and a staff contact for additional information. If you have not picked up the material ahead of time, copies will be available at the hearing.

~ REFERENCE PLANS ARE AVAILABLE. . .

At local libraries and at the County Courthouse. To view the amendment proposals in the context of the affected planning document, find the documents in the reference sections of local libraries, or the Permit Assistance Center. Planning documents may also be purchased. You may purchase joint plans from the associated city or town; the County sells the rural area plans at the Permit Assistance Center. The current Thurston County Comprehensive Plan is also available on-line.

~ BRIEFINGS AND WORK SESSIONS:

These meetings are held before and after the public hearings. Public testimony is not taken at these sessions, but the public is welcome to come to listen and ask questions of staff after the meetings. At work sessions following the hearings, the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners discuss the proposed amendments, consider public testimony and letters, and make their decisions. The dates and times of these sessions are usually

announced at the public hearing, or can be obtained by calling County staff. Staff usually provides additional analysis after the hearings, including summaries and responses to the public testimony. This material is also available to the public ahead of the work sessions, with a few copies available at the work sessions. It is at the work sessions following the hearings that the Planning Commissioners and County Commissioners deliberate. This is where the public can observe the basis for the Planning Commission's recommendation and the Board of County Commissioners' final decision.