

CHAPTER TWO--LAND USE

I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan depicts the future pattern of public and private use of the land in unincorporated Thurston County, and serves as both the Land Use and Rural Elements as they are defined by the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA). RCW 36.70A.070(1) requires the Land Use Element to include designation of:

"...the proposed general distribution and general location and extent of the uses of land, where appropriate, for agriculture, timber production, housing, commerce, industry, recreation, open spaces, general aviation airports, public utilities, public facilities, and other land uses. The land use element shall include population densities, building intensities, and estimates of future population growth. The land use element shall provide for protection of the quality and quantity of ground water used for public water supplies. Where applicable, the land use element shall review drainage, flooding, and stormwater run-off in the area and nearby jurisdictions and provide guidance for corrective actions to mitigate or cleanse those discharges that pollute waters of the state, including Puget Sound or waters entering Puget Sound."

The Rural Element must include:

"...lands that are not designated for urban growth, agriculture, forest, or mineral resources. The rural element shall permit land uses that are compatible with the rural character of such lands and provide for a variety of rural densities."

The Land Use Chapter includes county-wide population projections and the methodology used to derive these projections, population densities, and future land use designations, as well as the process and criteria for making those designations. The Land Use Chapter works in concert with the other chapters of the Comprehensive Plan to meet the requirements of the GMA. For example, drainage, flooding, and stormwater issues are addressed more fully in Chapter 7, Utilities and Chapter 9, Natural Environment.

The Land Use Chapter also identifies the location of urban growth areas (UGAs) around incorporated cities and towns. However, this chapter does not include land use designations for the UGAs. The respective city/county joint plans provide that information. Likewise, the Grand Mound Subarea Plan contains the future land use map for the Grand Mound UGA.

The Land Use Chapter was reviewed and updated in 2004 as part of a periodic review required by RCW 36.70A.130(4)(a).

II. URBAN GROWTH AREAS

A. History and Purpose of Thurston County's Urban Growth Areas:

In 1983, Thurston County, along with the cities of Olympia, Lacey and Tumwater, blazed the trail for growth management in Washington State by signing an inter-local government agreement called the "Urban Growth Management Agreement." That early agreement included an Urban Growth Management Boundary around the three cities to serve as a limit for the cities' expansion for 20 years.

The purposes of the county's original growth areas remain relevant today:

To provide for higher intensity development around the county's incorporated cities and towns and unincorporated community centers in order to concentrate development in areas where minimal impact to the environment, natural resources and rural atmosphere will occur.

To minimize public costs and conserve energy by using services and facilities efficiently through concentration of development and integration of jobs, shopping, services and housing.

To phase urban growth and infill with the provision of urban public services and facilities.

One of the main effects of an urban growth area is to provide a limit for the extension of urban utilities, especially sewer service. To that end, overall residential density in urban growth areas should be high enough to support urban public services and to provide affordable housing choices. There should be a variety of housing types, with most densities ranging from 4 to 16 dwelling units per acre.

Map M-14 identifies the urban growth areas for each city or town in Thurston County. The UGAs must accommodate the urban growth projected over the next 20 years including a reasonable market factor. Policies and actions emphasize the provision of urban land uses and services and include provisions specifically aimed at reducing low density residential sprawl. Joint plans established with each city and town include planning policies for each UGA. Joint plans are contained in separate documents, but are incorporated as part of the Thurston County Comprehensive Plan.

Detailed land use designations for all UGAs around cities and towns are provided in the following joint plans (Map M-14 is keyed to the numbering below):

1. Olympia/Thurston County Joint Plan
2. Lacey/Thurston County Joint Plan

3. Tumwater/Thurston County Joint Plan
4. Yelm/Thurston County Joint Plan
5. Rainier/Thurston County Joint Plan
6. Tenino/Thurston County Joint Plan
7. Bucoda/Thurston County Joint Plan

B. Growth Management Act Requirements for Urban Growth Areas:

The following points summarize the GMA requirements for urban growth areas (36.70A.110 RCW):

For each city or town, the county must designate an urban growth area, within which urban growth shall be encouraged and outside of which growth can occur only if it is not urban in nature.

An urban growth area may include territory outside of a city or town only if the territory already is characterized by urban growth or is adjacent to territory already characterized by urban growth.

The urban growth areas in the county must be sufficient to permit the urban growth that is projected to occur in the county over the next 20 years.

Urban growth areas must permit urban densities and include open spaces.

Urban growth should be located first in areas already characterized by urban growth that have existing public facility and service capacities to serve such development, and second in areas already characterized by urban growth that will be served by a combination of both existing public facilities and services and any additional public facilities and services needed.

At least every 10 years, the county must reevaluate Urban Growth Areas and the densities permitted within them.

In addition to these requirements, the GMA required all jurisdictions in the county to jointly develop a set of County-Wide Planning Policies to guide joint planning between the County and cities for urban growth areas. The policies in this chapter are consistent with the County-Wide Planning Policies.

C. Market Factor

Pursuant to RCW 36.7A.110(2), the Growth Management Act allows counties to include a “reasonable land market supply factor” when sizing urban growth areas.

RCW 36.7A.110(2). An urban growth area determination may include a reasonable land market supply factor and shall permit a range of urban densities and uses. In determining this market factor, cities and counties may consider local circumstances. Cities and counties have discretion in their comprehensive plans to make many choices about accommodating growth.

The County will require cities to bring forward evidence to justify that this “market factor” is to account for land that is not likely to be available during the next 20-year period. A “market factor” is not a substitution for population projections, which are addressed separately in Section III.

D. Subarea planning

Subarea planning is used in Thurston County to study and plan for distinct unincorporated communities within the county. Appendix C lists subarea plans that are no longer active. The County maintains active subarea plans for the communities of Rochester, Grand Mound, and Nisqually Valley. These plans are incorporated by reference into the Comprehensive Plan.

The **Grand Mound Subarea Plan** represents a detailed plan for lands within the Grand Mound Urban Growth Area. Like joint plans, the Subarea Plan is consistent with and adopted as a part of this Comprehensive Plan. Together, the Grand Mound Subarea Plan and this Comprehensive Plan constitute the growth management plan for the Grand Mound UGA, in compliance with the GMA and County-Wide Planning Policies. Refer to the Grand Mound Subarea Plan for more information.

The Grand Mound Subarea plan grew out of a study of the Rochester-Grand Mound area, a 9,500 acre area in southwest Thurston County with pockets of moderate density growth. The **Rochester Subarea Plan** was adopted in 1996 to determine land uses, densities and levels of development compatible with the GMA. The Plan does not recommend expansion of the urban growth area boundary beyond that incorporated in the Grand Mound UGA, but calls for consideration of a Future Urban Service Area (FUSA) overlay district for portions of the subarea. The FUSA designation indicates areas that should require additional analysis regarding the eventual delivery of public sewer and/or water systems as population growth and groundwater aquifer conditions may dictate in the future.

The **Nisqually Subarea Plan**, together with this Comprehensive Plan and associated development regulations, governs the land use in the Nisqually Valley.

III. POPULATION ALLOCATION AND FORECAST

As mentioned above, the GMA requires the County to plan to accommodate the population projected by Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM). The County-Wide Planning Policies direct the Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC)¹ to develop small-area population projections based on the framework of the countywide population projection provided by OFM. These small-area projections are often referred to as "population distributions" because they split up the projected population growth, distributing it among the county's cities, towns, and rural areas. The Thurston Regional Planning Council derives its own countywide population projections using a computer model that includes analysis of employment trends and more up-to-date assumptions population changes than what OFM uses.

The population distributions are intended to ensure that each city and town's Comprehensive Plan and any applicable Joint Plan accommodates the projected population growth. These population distributions are individually discussed in each of the Joint Plans adopted by the county. TRPC updates its population and land supply forecasting data under the GMA-required Buildable Lands Program. Therefore, numbers reflected in this plan should be treated as a point-in-time accounting of population distribution, and more current information may be obtained from TRPC.

RCW 36.70A.215 establishes a "Buildable Lands Program" requiring jurisdictions to track their ability to accommodate population growth. Thurston Regional Planning Council is the lead agency in Thurston County for the Buildable Lands Program, and provides data to the County for comprehensive and joint plan amendments required by RCW 36.70A.130 (1) and RCW 36.70A.130(3). **The 2007 Buildable Lands Report by TRPC found that a sufficient residential land supply exists to accommodate 20 years of projected population growth in all jurisdictions within Thurston County.**

¹The Thurston Regional Planning Council is a 20-member intergovernmental board made up of local government jurisdictions within Thurston County, plus the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation and the Nisqually Indian Tribe.

Table 2-1
Population Allocation, Forecast, and Residential Land Demand Data²

Jurisdiction	Population (April 1, 2006)	Capacity for New Dwelling Units	2028 Population Forecast ³	2028 Demand ⁴ (New Dwelling Units – Not Including Market Factor)	Excess Capacity ⁵
Bucoda ⁶	650	240	990	140	67% (Bucoda does not have a UGA outside of its city limits)
Grand Mound UGA	840	860	2550	740	16%
Lacey & UGA	66,900	20,600	104,000	16,600	24%
Olympia & UGA	55,200	15,800	80,400	13,000	22%

² Provided by the 2007 Buildable Lands Report, Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC). Numbers may be updated more frequently than the Comprehensive Plan. For current information, visit www.trpc.org.

³ Population forecast, 2007 Update, TRPC

⁴ Estimates the number of new dwellings necessary to accommodate forecast population for the first quarter of 2028. There is an average 3 month lag time between construction and occupancy.

⁵ Excess capacity of up to 25% can be justified as a “market factor”, which pursuant to RCW 36.70.110(2), accounts for the portion of the net land supply that is withheld from development or redevelopment during the forecasted 20-year period.

⁶ All of Bucoda’s UGA is currently within City limits – therefore no adjustment to the unincorporated UGA is possible.

Jurisdiction	Population (April 1, 2006)	Capacity for New Dwelling Units	2028 Population Forecast ³	2028 Demand ⁴ (New Dwelling Units – Not Including Market Factor)	Excess Capacity ⁵
Rainier & UGA	1,790	590	2,810	500	19%
Tenino & UGA	1,540	860	3,480	760	13%
Tumwater & UGA	21,700	10,100	40,100	8,200	24%
Yelm & UGA	5,900	9,900	22,400	7,300	35%
Chehalis Reservation	40	N/A	160	N/A	N/A
Nisqually Reservation	630	N/A	910	N/A	N/A
RURAL AREA	76,000	25,000 ⁷	105,100	14,400	=
Thurston County Total ⁸	231,000	84,300	363,000	61,700	25% ⁹

⁷ Theoretical capacity assuming water rights, public infrastructure and facilities are available to support rural development.

⁸ Numbers may not add due to rounding.

⁹ The excess capacity total is only for the cities and UGAs within Thurston County and does not include the rural area.

A. Growth Trends and Density

The most densely built areas of the County are, by design, the urban growth areas and cities. In new subdivisions the cities achieved an average net residential density of over 7.6 dwelling units per acre, where the unincorporated urban growth areas achieved 6.0 dwelling units per acre (between the years 2000 and 2004). This was a substantial increase over the previous five years (1995-1999), where net residential density was 6.2 units per acre in the cities, and 3.6 units per acre in the unincorporated growth areas. This was an increase of 24% in the cities, and 65% in the unincorporated growth areas.

The rural portion of the county contains areas designated as limited areas of more intensive rural development (LAMIRDs). The LAMIRDs accommodate small lot development and subdivisions that occurred prior to the adoption of the Growth Management Act in 1990 (e.g., around lakes, along some marine shorelines or at crossroads), as well as cluster-type developments. The goals and policies in this plan seek to maintain rural character and resource uses as well as minimize and contain existing areas or uses of more intensive rural development in the rural area while directing urban growth to appropriate areas.

IV. LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

This section of the Land Use Chapter describes each of the land use designations depicted on the Future Land Use Map (Map M-15). Mineral lands of long-term commercial significance are designated on a separate map (M-43), and open space lands and corridors are shown on Map M-31. Parks and trails owned by the County are also identified in the Thurston County Parks Plan, which is maintained as a separate planning document. The policies in Section VII provide further guidance in determining the appropriate land use designations for lands in rural areas. Development of lands within UGAs around cities and towns are guided by the land use designations within the adopted city/county joint plans.

In interpreting this plan, the following descriptions of the land use designations and the associated policies in Section VII of this chapter should be given the greatest weight and importance. The accompanying Future Land Use Map (Map M-15) is intended to be a visual representation of the descriptions and policies. Where there are apparent inconsistencies between the text and the map, the text shall control.

A. General Land Use Guidelines:

Determining how and where to designate land uses throughout the county is a complex process that involves an evaluation of geographic and scientific information, legal and social parameters, and citizen preferences. The following table describes the general guidelines used to make designation decisions:

Location Criteria	
Land Capability/ Environmental Constraints	<p>This guideline describes the characteristics of the land and its ability to support development at the intensity of use associated with each of the land use designations. It includes consideration of such factors as topography, permeability and stability of soils, geologic hazards, flood proneness and hydrologic conditions.</p> <p>When the term "environmental constraints" is used under this guideline, it refers to the presence of natural features of the land that would either: (1) limit an area's ability to accommodate development (e.g., flood hazards, geologic instability); or (2) be very sensitive to development or be destroyed by development (e.g., wetlands, Mima Mounds, eagle habitat, sensitive aquifers, public drinking water supplies or other critical areas).</p> <p>Technology can moderate the effects of some constraints. For example, building foundations may be constructed on unstable grounds, and sensitive resources such as oyster growing waters may be protected from the impacts of development by controlling pollutants from entering storm water and keeping sewage drainage away from these waters. Generally, however, the presence of widespread constraints or important sensitive areas should indicate caution in making certain land use designations. Caution is needed because the potential intensity level of the classification may not be able to be achieved due to constraints posed by the natural feature or condition; or the natural feature or condition could be lost or degraded.</p>
Natural Resources	<p>This guideline describes the kinds of natural resources that may exist on lands in each designation, or indicates when a certain designation may be inappropriate if important natural resources exist on the land or if it is too close to and may adversely impact a nearby natural resource area, such as agriculture, forestry, aquaculture, or mineral deposits.</p>
Public Services	<p>This guideline describes the levels or types of public services associated with each land use designation are described under this guideline. It also addresses any special public service needs or impacts to be avoided in association with each land use designation.</p>
Existing Land Uses	<p>This guideline describes the types and levels or intensities of land uses that should exist (or not exist) in or near areas being considered for each land use classification.</p>

General Decision-Making Guidelines	
Citizen Preference Identified through Public Process	Desires of the citizenry for certain types of land uses over other types should be an important consideration in making land use decisions. Citizen preference is important, for example, when deciding to give weight to one factor over another, or in deciding among conflicting factors.
Impacts on Economy, Employment, Tax Base	A variety of factors associated with these impacts should be considered when making land use designation decisions. For example, a county-wide balance should be maintained between residential and industrial/commercial/agricultural/ forestry areas in order to enhance and provide diversity to the county's tax base and employment opportunities
Easy to Identify Boundaries	The boundaries of land use designations should follow easily identified features on the land, such as utility corridors or observable terrain changes. When areas with severe limitations for development (e.g., soils, geology, flooding) do not coincide with such identifiable landmarks, the boundaries should be drawn with land capability in mind.

B. Rural Area Designations

The purpose of rural areas as defined by the County in compliance with the GMA is:

To support the rural aspects of Thurston County.

To protect areas with environmental constraints and preserve and buffer natural resource areas of agriculture, forestry, aquaculture, mineral deposits and fish and wildlife habitats from encroachment by or irreversible conversion to more intense uses.

To allow low intensity residential uses which do not require a high level of public services and facilities.

To protect and promote natural resource-based industries.

To protect “rural character” as defined in RCW 36.70A.030(14) as “the patterns of land use and development established by a county in the rural element of its comprehensive plan:

- (a) In which open space, the natural landscape, and vegetation predominate over the built environment;

- (b) That foster traditional rural lifestyles, rural-based economies, and opportunities to both live and work in rural areas;
- (c) That provide visual landscapes that are traditionally found in rural areas and communities;
- (d) That are compatible with the use of the land by wildlife and for fish and wildlife habitat;
- (e) That reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development;
- (f) That generally do not require the extension of urban governmental services; and
- (g) That are consistent with the protection of natural surface water flows and ground water and surface water recharge and discharge areas.”

Rural areas are characterized by a balance between the natural environment and human uses with low density residential dwellings, farms, forests, mining areas, outdoor recreation and other open space activities. Commercial uses will be small in scale and will provide convenience services to the rural neighborhood. Industrial uses will generally be those that are related to and dependent on natural resources such as agriculture, timber or minerals. Home-based occupations and industries will be allowed throughout the rural area provided they do not adversely affect the surrounding residential uses. Rural area residential densities will commonly be one dwelling unit per five, ten, or twenty acres. As previously noted, the rural county also contains pockets of higher density development. Some of those areas have been designated as LAMIRDs, which allows additional limited higher density development. Specific densities for each area designated in the Comprehensive Plan are implemented through the Official Zoning Map of Thurston County and the Thurston County zoning code and other development regulations, which are consistent with this plan. Rural area lands are designated according to the land use guidelines above. See Table 2-1A, below, for the percentage of land allocated to different rural uses.

Table 2-1A
Percentage of Land Allocated for Rural Uses¹⁰

Land Use Category	Total Acres	Percent Designated
Designated resource use (designated agriculture, forestry, and mineral lands) ¹¹	156,775 <i>(with mineral lands overlay: 162,399)</i>	38.8% (41%)
Rural (residential density 1 dwelling unit per 20 acres)	13,168.6	3.2%
Rural (residential density 1 dwelling unit per 10 acres)	4049.5	1%

Rural resource and residential (residential density 1 unit per 5 acres)	188,669	46.6%
Limited Areas of More intensive Rural Development (LAMIRDs) (densities greater than 1 dwelling unit per 5 acres)	14,281	3.5%
Public Parks, Trails, and Preserves	7,648	1.9%
Military Reservation and Institutional	18,499	4.5 %

¹⁰ Includes Grand Mound UGA, excludes incorporated areas and the UGAs for Olympia, Lacey, and Tumwater and areas designated as urban reserve. Excludes water, public and railroad rights-of-way. Source: Buildable Lands Work Program, Thurston Regional Planning Council.

¹¹ Low density residential uses are permitted in some of these areas, at densities ranging from 1 unit per 20 acres to 1 unit per 80 acres. Note that agriculture, forestry, and mining activities occur throughout the county, not just on land dedicated for these purposes. See Chapter 3.

Rural commercial and industrial use	1,695	.4%
Totals	404,785	100% (102%) ¹²

The actual use of land may be different than the use for which it is designated. For example, nonconforming residential uses may exist in commercial or industrial areas, agriculture is a permitted use in all rural residential areas, and some designated mineral land is not yet mined. The designation categories are described in detail, below.

1. Rural resource and low density residential designations

About 89.3 percent of rural Thurston County is designated for resource and low density residential uses appropriate for maintaining rural character (see Table 2-1A). These areas include designated forestry and agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance (see Chapter 3 for further discussion of designated resource lands and other natural resource uses). Other lands allow for rural residential use as well as for natural resource activities such as agriculture, forestry, and mining. The purpose, characteristics, and location guidelines for each rural resource and low density residential category are described below.

FORESTRY	
Purpose	<p>To conserve forest lands of long-term commercial significance.</p> <p>To maintain and enhance resource-based industries.</p> <p>To discourage residential encroachment and other incompatible development from long-term forest lands.</p> <p>To promote and protect forestry and its dependent rural community through the enhancement, protection, and perpetuation of the ability of private and public</p>

¹² Accounts for mineral lands designation, which is an overlay on rural residential resource lands.

FORESTRY	
	landowners to grow and harvest timber.
Definition and Characteristics	This designation includes lands meeting the Growth Management Act definition for forest lands of "long-term commercial significance." They are lands characterized by existing commercial resource production and have soils and other physical characteristics that are specially suited for timber production. Existing designated Forestry areas include much of the Bald Hills in southern Thurston County and the Black Hills in the western part of the county. Within designated forest lands, residential densities are limited to one unit per 80 acres, except for smaller ownerships (less than 640 acres in size) where residences, if clustered, can achieve a density of one unit per 20 acres. Additionally, legal lots from 10 to 39.99 acres in size, under the same ownership since August 23, 1993, may be divided one time into a maximum of two lots.
Locational Guidelines	The criteria for locating designated Forestry areas are based on the physical growing conditions of the land as well as the proximity to population areas and the possibility of more intense uses of the land. The full set of criteria is listed in Chapter Three - Natural Resource Lands.

AGRICULTURE	
Purpose	<p>To conserve agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance used for the production of crops, livestock or other agricultural products.</p> <p>To discourage residential encroachment and other incompatible development from long-term agricultural lands.</p> <p>To encourage the continued viability of agriculture.</p> <p>To encourage property owners to maintain property in agriculture uses.</p>

AGRICULTURE	
	To promote and protect agriculture and its dependent rural community through the enhancement, protection, and perpetuation of the ability of the private sector to produce food and fiber.
Definition and Characteristics	This designation includes lands meeting the Growth Management Act definition for agricultural lands of "long-term commercial significance." They are lands characterized by existing commercial resource production and have soils and other physical characteristics that are specially suited for agricultural production. Existing designated Agriculture areas include portions of the Nisqually, Chehalis and Skookumchuck River Valleys, among other areas. Within the designated lands in the Nisqually Valley, residential densities are limited to one unit per 40 acres, unless residences are clustered, allowing a density of one unit per five acres. Within all other designated agricultural lands, residential densities are limited to one unit per 20 acres.
Locational Guidelines	The criteria for locating designated Agriculture areas are based on the Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development's guidelines for the classification and designation of resource lands, as well as existing county policies and an analysis of local conditions. The full set of criteria is listed in Chapter Three - Natural Resource Lands.

RURAL – ONE DWELLING UNIT PER TWENTY ACRES	
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect public health and safety by minimizing development and avoiding incompatible uses in environmentally sensitive and hazardous areas such as the Black River Corridor, the Nisqually Bluff, and parcels completely covered by critical areas. • Provide greater opportunities for protecting

RURAL – ONE DWELLING UNIT PER TWENTY ACRES	
	critical areas and creating open space corridors.
Definition and Characteristics	Primary land uses are open space, outdoor recreation, residential, agriculture, forestry and compatible mineral extraction approved through a special use process. Residences are allowed at a density of one dwelling unit per twenty acres but they may be further limited due to physical constraints and natural hazards, including the presence of critical areas.
Locational Guidelines	<p>Land Capability and Environmental Characteristics. This designation is appropriate for lands that are within the Black River Corridor, along the Nisqually Bluff or severely constrained by environmentally sensitive or hazardous areas.</p> <p>Natural Resources. The area may contain forests, mineral deposits, critical areas and soils suitable for agriculture.</p> <p>Public Services. Allowed uses do not require provision of urban services or utilities. However, the area may be located along arterials, within areas containing pre-existing small-lot development, and/or relatively close to existing centers of employment and/or personal services.</p> <p>Existing Land Uses. The majority of the land is comprised of parcels twenty acres or larger in size, although some smaller parcels may be present. Residences, agriculture, forestry, mineral extraction, open space, or undeveloped land may be present.</p>

RURAL – ONE DWELLING UNIT PER TEN ACRES	
Purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To minimize flooding and development at risk of flooding in the Salmon Creek Basin. • To avoid increasing saltwater intrusion in areas underlain by aquifers with elevated chloride levels.
Definition and Characteristics	<p>Primary land uses are resource-oriented (e.g., mineral extraction approved through a special use process, agriculture and forestry), open space, and residential. Additional compatible uses that support or rely upon agriculture, forestry, mineral extraction, and open space may be allowed. Residential densities are limited to one dwelling per ten acres but may be further limited due to physical constraints and natural hazards, including the presence of critical areas.</p>
Locational Guidelines	<p>Land Capability and Environmental Characteristics. This designation is appropriate for lands that are environmentally constrained, such as lands that are underlain by aquifers contaminated with chloride and lands within the flood prone Salmon Creek Basin.</p> <p>Natural Resources. The area may contain forests, mineral deposits, , soils suitable for agriculture, and critical areas.</p> <p>Public Services. Allowed uses do not require provision of urban services or utilities. However, the area may be located along arterials, within areas containing pre-existing small-lot development, and/or relatively close to existing centers of employment and/or personal services.</p> <p>Existing Land Uses. The area is predominantly in parcels ten acres or larger in size, although some smaller and some larger parcels may be present. Residences, agriculture, forestry, mineral extraction, open space, or undeveloped land may be present.</p>

URBAN RESERVE – ONE DWELLING UNIT PER FIVE ACRES	
Purpose	To preserve development options in areas adjacent to existing urban growth areas, cities and towns until such time as the areas are included in urban growth areas (UGAs) and urban utilities and services become available.
Definition and Characteristics	Primary land uses are agriculture and forestry, open space, and low density residential. Permitted uses and development options are limited so as to avoid interfering with potential conversion of the area to urban use.
Locational Guidelines	<p>Land Capability and Environmental Characteristics. This designation is appropriate for lands that located adjacent to an urban growth area or city that appear to be capable of supporting urban development. Some critical areas or other minor physical constraints to development may be present.</p> <p>Natural Resources. The area may have moderate potential for agriculture, forestry, or mineral extraction. However, the area should not include long-term agriculture or forestry lands.</p> <p>Public Services. Allowed uses do not require provision of urban utilities and services. Public utilities and services should be feasible to extend upon inclusion of the area within an UGA.</p> <p>Existing Land Uses. Scattered residences, agriculture, forestry, mineral extraction, open space, or undeveloped land may be present.</p>

RURAL RESIDENTIAL AND RESOURCE -- ONE UNIT PER FIVE ACRES	
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To maintain the rural character of the county. • To buffer environmentally sensitive areas and resource management areas from incompatible activities. • To maintain a balance between human uses and the natural environment.
Definition and Characteristics	<p>Primary land uses in the one unit per five acre areas are resource-oriented (farming, forestry, mineral extraction), open space, and low density residential. Residential use may be limited due to physical land capability constraints, including the presence of critical areas. Innovative techniques are used by the County to provide a variety of rural densities within this designation.</p>
Locational Guidelines	<p>Land Capability and Environmental Characteristics. This designation is appropriate for lands that may have severe soil limitations, critical areas and/or very limited ground water. Lands subject to this designation may be located within the adjacent uplands to an aquaculture management district or "natural" shoreline under the Shoreline Management Program.</p> <p>Natural Resources. The area has moderate potential for farming or forestry management or may be adjacent to long-term resource lands.</p> <p>Public Services. The area is too far from the urban area to enable cost-effective provision of public services. Uses do not require extension or provision of urban services.</p> <p>Existing Land Uses. The land is generally in parcels five acres or larger in size.</p>

MCALLISTER GEOLOGICALLY SENSITIVE AREA	
Purpose	<p>To maintain areas of rural living where the natural environment is in balance with human use.</p> <p>To provide for residential, commercial, and agricultural uses of a type and density which will minimize the potential for contamination or significant loss in recharge capacity of a vulnerable ground water aquifer and potable water source of great importance to the general public.</p>
Definition and Characteristics	<p>That portion of the McAllister Springs recharge area outside the urban growth area boundary. These lands are characterized by natural resource-based uses, such as agriculture and forestry, residential uses at a density of one unit per five acres, and limited home-based industries and home occupations.</p>
Locational Guidelines	<p>This designation is limited to lands within the McAllister Springs recharge area outside of the north county Urban Growth Area boundary.</p>

2. Limited areas of more intensive rural development (LAMIRD) designations

Under the GMA, zoning districts allowing residential densities in the rural area greater than one dwelling unit per five acres are generally considered to promote sprawling, low-density development inconsistent with the Goal 2 of the GMA. To recognize existing residential development in the rural areas that is too intensive to be considered rural, in 1997, the Washington State Legislature adopted amendments to the GMA that provided for “limited areas of more intensive rural development”, or LAMIRDs. (RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)).

Areas that meet the requirements established by the GMA can retain their higher density zoning. Areas that do not qualify for designation as a LAMIRD must be designated for a rural density of no more than one dwelling unit per five acres.

RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)(i) defines LAMIRDs as:

“Rural development consisting of the infill, development, or redevelopment of existing commercial, industrial, residential, or mixed-use areas, whether characterized as shoreline development, villages, hamlets, rural activity centers, or crossroads developments.”

When designating residential LAMIRDs, the GMA requires the County to establish logical outer boundaries that contain the development that existed as of July 1, 1990 (the date Thurston County was initially required to plan under the GMA). This “built environment” may include structures located above or below ground, such as buildings and water and sewer lines. Residential LAMIRDs also may include limited undeveloped lands that are located within the logical outer boundary, but they should not allow a new pattern of low density sprawl. Thurston County used the LAMIRD criteria adopted by the Washington State Legislature in 1997 to designate LAMIRD boundaries. Data used to establish these boundaries included aerial photographs from 1990, building permits, and water service systems that were in place by July 1, 1990.

A relatively small percentage (3.2%) of rural Thurston County is designated as residential LAMIRDs. These areas, which allow residential land use at densities greater than 1 unit per 5 acres (see Table 2-1A), accommodate lots developed prior to July 1, 1990, and provide some limited infill potential as allowed under the GMA. These areas of more intensive rural development include unincorporated communities such as Boston Harbor and Rochester, crossroads communities, neighborhood developments, areas around rural lakes, and some marine shoreline areas. The purpose, characteristics, and locational guidelines for each LAMIRD category are described below.

RESIDENTIAL LAMIRD – ONE DWELLING UNIT PER TWO ACRES	
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To recognize residential development in the rural county that was predominately developed at a density of one dwelling unit per two acres prior to July 1, 1990. • To minimize and contain these areas of more intensive rural development to prevent new patterns of low-density sprawl.
Definition and Characteristics	<p>These areas are characterized by residential development at a density of approximately one dwelling unit per two acres. A limited amount of undeveloped land may exist within the logical outer boundary.</p>
Locational Guidelines	<p>New or expanded areas of this designation should be avoided (see the following Goals and Policies section). Areas designated in this category meet the following criteria:</p> <p>Natural Resources. The area has low resource management potential, although small farms and forestry activities may be present nearby.</p> <p>Public Services. Uses do not require extension or provision of urban services. The area may be served by a community water system.</p> <p>Existing Land Uses. The area has existing residential developments at a density of approximately one dwelling unit per two acres. There may be some larger residential lots to allow for limited potential for infill development.</p>

RESIDENTIAL LAMIRD – ONE DWELLING UNIT PER ACRE	
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide for residential development in rural areas that was predominately developed at a density of one dwelling unit per acre prior to July 1, 1990. • To minimize and contain these areas of more intensive rural development, to prevent new patterns of low-density sprawl.
Definition and Characteristics	<p>These areas are characterized by residential development at a density of approximately one dwelling unit per acre. A limited amount of undeveloped land may exist within the logical outer boundary.</p>
Locational Guidelines	<p>New or expanded areas of this designation should be avoided (see the following Goals and Policies section). Areas designated in this category meet the following criteria:</p> <p>Natural Resources. The area does not have highly productive resource management potential, although small farms and forestry activities may exist nearby.</p> <p>Public Services. Uses do not require extension or provision of urban services. The area may be served by a community water system.</p> <p>Existing Land Uses. The area has existing residential developments at a density of approximately one dwelling unit per acre. There may be some larger residential parcels to allow for limited potential for infill development.</p>

RESIDENTIAL LAMIRD – TWO DWELLING UNITS PER ACRE	
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To recognize residential development related to marine and/or freshwater shorelines in rural areas that was predominately developed at a density of approximately two dwelling units per acre prior to July 1, 1990. • To minimize and contain these areas of more intensive rural development to prevent new patterns of low-density sprawl.
Definition and Characteristics	<p>These areas are characterized by residential development at a density of approximately two dwelling units per one acre. A limited amount of undeveloped land may exist within the logical outer boundary. These areas may have some existing commercial or resort-related land uses.</p>
Locational Guidelines	<p>New or expanded areas of this designation should be avoided (see the following Goals and Policies section.) Areas already designated in this category meet the following criteria:</p> <p>Natural Resources. Area does not have farm or forestry management potential and is not within the uplands adjacent to an aquaculture management district.</p> <p>Public Services. Uses do not require extension or provision of urban services. Although, the area may be served by a community water system.</p> <p>Existing Land Uses. The area has existing residential shoreline development at a density of approximately two dwelling units per acre. There may be some larger residential parcels to allow for limited potential for infill development. Current land uses may include seasonal and year-round residences and resort/recreational activities. The area may be a marine or freshwater shoreline, including lakefront.</p>

3. Public land designations

Publicly-owned land designations, including parks, major institutions, and the Fort Lewis Military Base, make up about six percent of the rural area. Additional publicly-owned and public purpose facilities are inventoried in Map M-15A and are discussed below.

PUBLIC PARKS, TRAILS AND PRESERVES	
Purpose	<p>To identify and protect unique and outstanding examples of publicly owned fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas or unique geologic features.</p> <p>To identify publicly owned (federal, state, and county) parks and trails that may be used for passive and active recreation.</p> <p>To acknowledge the ongoing responsibility of the county, state and federal government to protect critical areas and other resource values and provide for public recreation on lands within this designation.</p>
Definition and Characteristics	<p>The public preserves designation comprises two types of lands: publicly owned conservation lands and publicly owned parks and trails. Conservation lands are owned by a federal, state or county governmental entity and are maintained as closely as possible to their natural state. The resources present on these lands are unique or rare, and are at risk of loss or damage. Parks and trails may include conservation lands, but also include areas of both passive and active public recreation.</p>
Locational Guidelines	<p>Land Capability/Environmental Constraints. Lands within this designation have unique or rare resource values and are publicly-owned conservation areas, or provide opportunities for public recreation.</p> <p>Natural Resources. The resource values of conservation lands within this designation include important fish and wildlife habitat and unique geologic features.</p> <p>Public Services. These areas are too far from the</p>

PUBLIC PARKS, TRAILS AND PRESERVES	
	<p>urban area to enable cost effective provision of public services. Uses do not require extension or provision of urban services.</p> <p>Existing Land Uses. The primary use of conservation lands is resource preservation, not public recreation. Examples of such lands include wildlife refuges, and state and county natural area preserves. The primary use of parks and trails may be public recreation, although some sites may also include conservation areas. Uses are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan for Parks and Recreation.</p>
MILITARY RESERVATION	
Purpose	To recognize the Fort Lewis military base and its military mission of training and national defense.
Definition and Characteristics	This designation comprises that portion of the Fort Lewis military base located in Thurston County. These lands are owned by the federal government for the purpose of military training and national defense. Secondary uses are timber production and open space.
Locational Guidelines	This designation should include only those lands within the boundaries of the Fort Lewis military base.
INSTITUTIONAL	
Purpose	<p>To recognize the unique, rural character of The Evergreen State College (TESC) campus, which includes a compact developed core and large expanse of undeveloped land, largely forested, extending to Eld Inlet.</p> <p>To recognize the established intent of TESC to preserve the undeveloped portions of the campus</p>

INSTITUTIONAL	
	as a natural resource and an educational resource for the college.
Definition and Characteristics	This designation covers the state-owned lands of TESC. The buildings on the campus are served by City of Olympia water and LOTT sanitary sewer. However, the great majority of the college's property is undeveloped forested land. Additional development within this designation may occur if it meets the overall purposes above.
Locational Guidelines	This designation is intended for the state-owned lands of The Evergreen State College.

4. Commercial and industrial land designations:

The rural area contains limited commercial and industrial land uses (.4%) that provide economic opportunity and services to rural area residents.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONVENIENCE COMMERCIAL	
Purpose	To provide for the location of very small businesses that serve nearby residents with everyday convenience shopping goods and services.
Definition and Characteristics	<p>Neighborhood convenience areas are characterized by a high degree of compatibility with surrounding residential areas. Compatibility is achieved through the use of small buildings, small overall area devoted to commercial use, and design and layout which screens residential areas from lights, storage and parking areas.</p> <p>Typical neighborhood convenience uses are small groceries, gas stations and other small-scale businesses, including residences in conjunction with such businesses.</p> <p>Most neighborhood convenience areas will consist of only one business. However, the various types of neighborhood convenience uses serving a given</p>

NEIGHBORHOOD CONVENIENCE COMMERCIAL	
	<p>area should be clustered together in small planned centers or around existing single businesses to avoid the development of commercial strips or many small businesses strung out along arterial roads.</p> <p>Neighborhood convenience in rural areas should not exceed one acre in size. They commonly serve a population of less than 5,000.</p> <p>Examples of neighborhood convenience stores or centers include Gull Harbor, and Meridian Road at Yelm Highway.</p>
Locational Guidelines	<p>Land Capability and Environmental Characteristics. The area should have minimal environmental constraints and be capable of supporting commercial development. Land should be relatively level and free of critical areas.</p> <p>Natural Resources. The area has minimal natural resource management potential. Development of the area will have little detrimental impact on nearby agriculture, forestry, aquaculture, mineral deposits or other natural resource uses.</p> <p>Public Services. Neighborhood convenience commercial areas should be located on collector or arterial roads. New designations should be sited at intersections and at locations that are or can be freed of congestion problems resulting from topography or poor road design. Their siting should not result in significant traffic impacts on local streets serving residential areas. Utility service, including on-site, should be at a level appropriate to serve the intensity of proposed commercial activity.</p> <p>Existing Land Use. For the siting of new neighborhood convenience businesses, there should be residential development in the area not served by such businesses. In rural areas, neighborhood convenience uses may be located as needed for convenience, and should be more</p>

NEIGHBORHOOD CONVENIENCE COMMERCIAL	
	widely separated than in urban growth areas. New neighborhood convenience businesses to serve areas where one or more such businesses already exist should be located adjacent to the existing businesses in small centers or clusters, rather than having businesses strung out along major roads.
RURAL COMMERCIAL CENTER	
Purpose	<p>To provide for the commercial needs of an identified rural community.</p> <p>To provide for redevelopment and infilling of rural commercial areas in a unified center configuration, not as strip commercial development.</p> <p>To provide for limited expansion of a commercial center to serve the growth of the surrounding rural community over time, contained within the logical outer boundary of the commercial center.</p>
Definition and Characteristics	<p>Rural Commercial Centers serve an identified rural community and have a range of uses to meet the everyday needs of the community. Development within these centers shall be functionally and visually compatible with the surrounding rural area and uses in order to protect the rural character. Typical uses in Rural Commercial Centers are small offices, retail sales, grocery stores, drug stores, video stores, garden supplies, nurseries, hardware, lumber sales, service stations, taverns, boat and auto sales, mini-storage facilities, and public facilities and services.</p> <p>The Rural Commercial Centers within the County vary in size, based upon the size of the rural community served. Existing Commercial Centers include Rochester, South Bay/Schinke Road, Steamboat Island Road Interchange at Highway 101, among others. Expansion of a Rural Commercial Center is addressed in the goals and</p>

RURAL COMMERCIAL CENTER	
	policies section below.
Locational Guidelines	<p>Land Capability and Environmental Characteristics. The boundaries of Rural Commercial Centers should be logical (see policy below), and the area should have minimal environmental constraints and be capable of supporting commercial development. Land should be relatively level and free of critical areas.</p> <p>Natural Resources. The area has minimal natural resource management potential. Development of the area will have little detrimental impact on nearby agriculture, forestry, aquaculture, mineral deposits or other natural resource uses.</p> <p>Public Services. Rural Commercial Centers should be located at major crossroads within the rural community that they serve and should take direct access off of collector or arterial roads. Expansion of Centers should only take place where traffic congestion will not result from topography or poor road design and where traffic will not have significant impacts on the surrounding rural area and uses. Utility services, including on-site septic systems and community water systems, should be at a level appropriate to serve the proposed uses.</p> <p>Existing Land Use. Uses within the Rural Commercial Center designation shall be compatible with rural character, which includes both functional and visual components. The functional component describes land put to uses that are dependent on a rural setting. For example, localized commercial uses that serve a rural population or other rural activities are dependent upon a rural location close to their constituencies. On the other hand, a commercial business that is oriented to a larger than rural market or service area is not dependent upon a rural location. If a proposed commercial business will interfere with the surrounding rural area or uses by significant traffic, light, noise, etc.,</p>

RURAL COMMERCIAL CENTER	
	<p>then that business is incompatible with rural character.</p> <p>The visual component describes the visual attributes of the traditional rural landscape. If the visual character of the rural landscape is unduly disrupted or altered by a proposed commercial use, then that use is incompatible with rural character.</p>
HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL	
Purpose	<p>To provide for the location of facilities and services needed by the traveling public (food, gas, lodging). They are to be located at or in the vicinity of major highway and freeway interchanges.</p>
Definition and Characteristics	<p>Uses typical of highway commercial areas are motels, gas stations, restaurants, travel trailer parks, and convenience stores for the traveling public. They should be located where they can be reached conveniently and safely at major highway and freeway interchanges. Existing Highway Commercial locations in rural areas include the south side of the Mud Bay/Highway 101 interchange and Martin Way/I-5 interchange in the Nisqually Valley.</p>
Locational Guidelines	<p>Land Capability and Environmental Characteristics. The area should have minimal environmental constraints and be capable of supporting commercial development. Land should be relatively level and free of critical areas.</p> <p>Natural Resources. The area has minimal natural resource management potential. Development of the area will have little detrimental impact on nearby agriculture, forestry, aquaculture, mineral deposits or other natural resource uses.</p> <p>Public Services. The area has state highway or freeway interchange access and is or can be freed of congestion problems resulting from topography</p>

HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL	
	<p>or poor road design. Siting should not result in significant traffic impacts on streets serving residential areas. Utility service is available or can be provided to the level required by proposed uses.</p> <p>Existing Land Use. In most cases, the area may already be committed to commercial use. For proposed new Highway Commercial areas, the land should be undeveloped or largely undeveloped.</p>
RURAL RESOURCE INDUSTRIAL	
Purpose	<p>To provide areas for natural resource based industrial uses, located near agriculture, forest and mineral resource lands.</p> <p>To provide areas where industrial uses may locate that involve the processing, fabrication, wholesaling and storage of products associated with natural resource uses</p> <p>To provide areas where industrial uses may locate that are functionally and visually compatible with the character of the rural area.</p>
Definition and Characteristics	<p>This industrial designation applies within the rural area of the County. A wide range of natural resource-related uses may be accommodated which are dependent upon agriculture, forest practices or mineral extraction or industries that are dependent upon a rural setting. Industrial areas and development shall be functionally and visually compatible with the surrounding rural area and uses in order to protect the rural character. (Note that additional industrial areas are located in the Rochester-Grand Mound area, as well as the Yelm Urban Growth Area. These areas are described in the corresponding Subarea or Joint Plan.)</p>
Locational Guidelines	<p>Land Capability and Environmental Characteristics. Land should be capable of supporting industrial development with minimal environmental</p>

RURAL RESOURCE INDUSTRIAL	
	<p>constraints. Particularly important is the ability to support uses without significant adverse effects on surface or ground water. Land should generally be level and free of critical areas.</p> <p>Natural Resources. The area should be located so that development will not detrimentally impact agriculture, forestry, aquaculture or other natural resource uses. The area to be designated industrial should itself have minimal potential for natural resource management/utilization.</p> <p>Public Services:</p> <p>Utilities. Utility services should be at levels appropriate to serve the rural area and the intensity of proposed industrial activity. Industrial development will be limited to uses not requiring public sewer and where the land can support the industrial uses with on-site septic systems and water without adversely affecting surface or ground water.</p> <p>Transportation. Rural industrial areas should rely either on rail service or be within close proximity of a freeway interchange or state highway. Such areas shall have direct access to arterial or collector roads and shall not result in significant adverse traffic impacts on surrounding rural areas and uses.</p> <p>Existing Land Use. Uses within this designation shall be compatible with rural character, which includes both functional and visual components. The functional component describes land put to uses that are dependent on a rural setting. For example, sawmills should be close to forest lands. An industry that has no orientation to rural or resource based activities is not dependent upon a rural location. If rural lands and/or rural uses on those lands will be interfered with by the traffic, light, noise, etc. from a proposed industrial use,</p>

RURAL RESOURCE INDUSTRIAL	
	<p>then that use is incompatible with rural character.</p> <p>The visual component describes the visual attributes of the traditional rural landscape. If the visual character of the rural landscape is unduly disrupted or altered by a proposed use, then that use is incompatible with rural character. Site design, landscaping, design and construction of internal and access roads and building scale should reinforce the set boundaries and rural nature of the industrial area to further discourage future industrial expansion beyond the industrial boundary.</p>

V. LANDS FOR PUBLIC PURPOSES

The GMA requires the County to identify lands useful for public purposes, such as utility corridors, transportation corridors, landfills, sewage treatment facilities, stormwater management facilities, recreation, schools, and other public uses [RCW 36.70A.150]. These areas are described throughout the Comprehensive Plan, and in more detail as follows:

The Transportation Chapter (Chapter 5) identifies the type and quality of county roads, bike paths, railways, and other transportation corridors;

The Capital Facilities Plan (Chapter 6) inventories and prioritizes acquisition of public purpose lands, identifies needs for shared facilities with other jurisdictions, and outlines the siting process for essential public facilities;

The Utilities Chapter (Chapter 7) identifies major utility providers; and

The Natural Environment Chapter (Chapter 9) includes a map of important greenspaces and addresses stormwater and waste management.

In addition, the County identifies and plans for public recreation facilities in the Comprehensive Parks, Recreation, Trails and Natural Resource Preserve Plan 2020, which is adopted separately from this Comprehensive Plan. See Appendix C for a list of the other planning documents that address public facility planning in Thurston County.

The current location and distribution of major public purpose lands in the rural area are inventoried on Map 15-A. Some of these lands are designated and/or zoned for specific public purposes, such as parks and public preserves. Other public lands are identified for

planning purposes, as the location of lands owned by other agencies, jurisdictions, or private companies may change over time. Joint Plans further identify public purpose lands in the UGAs.

A. Olympia Airport Area

The Olympia Regional Airport is located within the Tumwater UGA, and its development and the use of adjacent areas is primarily guided by the Tumwater/Thurston County Joint Plan and accompanying development regulations for the Tumwater Urban Growth Area. However, airport approach and departure areas influence lands outside the Tumwater UGA, creating an airport hazard overlay area addressed in this Comprehensive Plan. The guidance provided below gives direction as to the types and intensities of land uses most compatible with the noise effects and safety concerns of a growing municipal airport. This section of the Plan is also intended to identify those uses most compatible with the safety needs of low flying aircraft. The airport area is designated for the following purposes:

To identify areas around the Olympia Airport where high concentrations of people should be discouraged for health and safety reasons and where uses compatible with high noise levels are encouraged.

To enable future development of the Olympia airport and air service to Thurston County without major disruption or incurring safety hazards.

1. Definitions and Characteristics

The "airport hazard overlay area" includes those lands within the airport approach areas and the airport traffic pattern area (see Exhibit A). These lands are directly within the immediate sphere of influence of the Olympia Airport, both in terms of immediate operations and long-range development plans.

The airport hazard overlay area should be characterized by land uses that are compatible with an airport or its activities. Such land uses outside the Urban Growth Area include agriculture, open space oriented recreation and low intensity residential (densities of 1 dwelling unit per 2 acres or lower densities). High to moderate levels of noise will occur and, therefore, land uses compatible with such noise impacts are encouraged in airport areas. Uses that require tall structures, which produce extensive visual pollution through smoke, glare or dust and which may create hazards for low overflying aircraft are incompatible with the airport area.

2. Guidelines for Development in Airport Hazard Overlay Areas

Land underlying the airport approach areas should be kept in very low intensity uses, including very low residential density (not to exceed 1 dwelling unit per 2 acres) to protect against possible accidents.

Preferred zoning in the airport area (outside of the Urban Growth Area) should be that which permits uses of the land that are best able to coexist with potential noise problems. Agriculture and open space uses are most desirable in this area

No radio interference or obstructions should penetrate air navigation surfaces. Such penetrations include smoke emissions, steam or glare that would cause safety hazards.

Final plats within 2 miles of the airport hazard overlay area, should contain statements notifying prospective purchasers the property may be affected by airport operations (see Exhibit A).

New, non-residential uses that would involve a concentration of people (e.g., recreational facilities, schools, child and adult care facilities, hospitals, and other types of gathering places should not be located within the Inner and Outer Approach/Departure Zones and Inner Turning Zone (Zones 2, 3 and 4 in Exhibit A) in the rural area.

Structures and trees within the airport hazard overlay area should not penetrate airspace surfaces as defined by Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 77, except as necessary and incidental to airport regulations.

VI. LAND USE DECISION-MAKING

The process used to determine major land use policies and decisions can be as important as the decisions themselves. The process can make the difference between policies that will be used because they are widely accepted, or those that will be ignored.

In making land use decisions, one of county government's ongoing challenges is to balance the various special interests of the community within the context of protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the community at large. Therefore, an issue of particular concern is how to take into account the variety of community interests as the policies are being developed.

How constituents are notified of new policy making projects and how they are able to influence the decisions are very important in this regard. Thurston County was among the first in Washington State to give residents the opportunity to develop their own detailed sub-area plans.

The kinds of plans prepared by a local government and the degree of coordination between them can make the difference between land use decisions that seem to go in one direction through one planning process and another way through other plans. One of the objectives in this chapter deals with how plans are to be related and which plan provides the framework for the others.

Another important aspect of the land use decision making process is how land use plans are coordinated with permit and regulatory requirements and other programs.

An additional concern is how to achieve balance between being able to rely on land use plans to direct future development for a reasonable length of time into the future, yet keeping them updated as conditions change.

Related to the issue of reliability of plans is coordination between the county and other jurisdictions so that all are working toward common goals for future development. This is particularly important within county areas subject to annexation by cities.

The last section of the goals, objectives and policies in this chapter provides direction for four aspects of decision-making:

1. How citizens participate;
2. What kinds of plans the county will prepare to guide its physical development and how they will interrelate;
3. How to keep the comprehensive land use plan and its implementing documents up to date, understandable and reliable; and

4. How governments should coordinate, particularly for lands around the cities and towns where future annexations will occur.

VII. GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES¹³

GOAL 1: TO PROVIDE FOR RURAL AREAS THAT:

- MAINTAIN A SUSTAINABLE BALANCE BETWEEN HUMAN USES AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN ORDER TO PROTECT RURAL CHARACTER;
- MAINTAIN THE LAND AND WATER ENVIRONMENTS REQUIRED BY NATURAL RESOURCE-BASED ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES, FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITATS, RURAL LIFESTYLES, OUTDOOR RECREATION, AND OTHER OPEN SPACE; AND
- DEVELOP AT LOW LEVELS OF INTENSITY SO THAT DEMANDS WILL NOT BE CREATED FOR URBAN LEVELS OF PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES.

OBJECTIVE A: Rural Land Use and Activities - County development requirements and programs provide for a balance between human uses and the natural environment in rural and resource areas, the conservation of rural resources, and for low levels of demand for public services and facilities.

POLICIES:

1. Priority rural area land uses should be small scale farms, forestry and mining areas, outdoor recreation and other open space activities, scattered residences, and rural residential developments.
2. Residential development in rural areas should be allowed on lands that can physically support it and at densities that will not require urban levels of service or significantly impact rural character or environmental quality. Densities should be low enough to discourage leapfrogging of UGA development, and not undermine the natural environment or natural resource management.

¹³ Additional Goals, Objectives, and Policies throughout this Plan further elaborate on rural land use issues. For example, resource protection is discussed in Chapters 3 and 9, utilities and public services are discussed in Chapters 5, 6, and 7, and economic development in the rural area is discussed in Chapter 8. All the policies within this Plan are internally consistent.

3. Residential areas of more intensive rural development shall be minimized and contained to avoid additional low-density sprawl in the rural area. Those areas of higher density development that meet the statutory criteria established in RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d) should be designated as limited areas of more intensive rural development (LAMIRDs). The criteria for designating LAMIRDs include establishing boundaries that:
 - a. Ensure preservation of the character of the existing neighborhood and community;
 - b. Follow physical boundaries such as water bodies, streets and highways, and land forms;
 - c. Prevent abnormally irregular boundaries;
 - d. Ensure that public facilities and services are provided in a manner that does not permit low-density sprawl; and
 - e. Shall not extend beyond the logical outer boundary of the July 1, 1990 built environment, with limited ability for additional infill.
4. Residential use near designated long-term agriculture or forestry areas, designated mineral lands, and other natural resource lands should be developed in a manner that minimizes potential conflicts and reduces unnecessary conversion of farm and forest land. When mechanisms such as clustering and buffering are used, these mechanisms should be scaled, located, and designed to maintain rural character and environmental quality.
5. Agriculture and forestry should be accommodated on rural lands in addition to designated long-term resource lands. The development of rural areas for residential uses should not preclude the use of land for agriculture or timber production. Mineral extraction consistent with the provisions of this plan should be permitted through a special use process.
6. Home-based occupations and industries should be allowed throughout the rural area provided they do not adversely affect the surrounding residential uses or rural character.
7. Isolated commercial and industrial businesses in the rural area, legally established on or before July 1, 1990, that may not be principally designed to serve the existing or projected rural population and nonresidential uses, but do provide job opportunities for rural residents, should be allowed to expand or change use provided the expansion or conversion does not constitute new urban development in the rural area, is contained on the same lot as the existing use, is visually compatible with the surrounding rural area, and detrimental impacts to adjacent properties will not be increased or intensified.

8. New industrial uses in rural areas (other than small scale home-based industries) should generally be those appropriate to the lower densities and land uses of rural areas, such as:
 - a. Industries related to and dependent on natural resources of agriculture, aquaculture, timber, and minerals and
 - b. Industries that are functionally and visually compatible with the character of the rural area and dependent upon a rural setting.
9. Neighborhood convenience commercial uses should be permitted throughout rural areas, located at road intersections and taking access from collector or arterial roads. Generally, other types of commercial uses should locate in the urban area, the rural towns, or in rural commercial centers.
10. Rural commercial centers should be designated as limited areas of more intensive rural development (LAMIRDs) using the criteria established in RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d). Rural commercial centers should be designated only for identified rural community areas, like Rochester and Steamboat Island Road at Highway 101. These centers should serve a larger rural community than neighborhood convenience and have a greater variety of uses, while maintaining a rural character.
11. Municipal sewer utilities should not be extended into rural areas except to protect basic public health and safety, and the environment. See also Goal 1, Objective B, Policy #7, below.
12. Buildings and roads should be located on sites in ways that minimize the need for cutting, grading or the removal of native plant material.
 - a. Clearing, grading, and development activities should respect natural features, processes and wildlife habitat.
 - b. Neighboring properties, stormwater drainage facilities and surface water bodies should be protected from sedimentation and increased runoff during and after construction.
 - c. As much natural vegetation as possible, especially large trees, should be preserved as development occurs.
13. Archaeological and historic resources should be identified and protected to the greatest extent possible.
14. Special uses that may be permitted in the rural area should be constrained in size and scale so as to maintain rural character. The primary purpose of special uses should be to serve the rural area residents of Thurston County.

15. To the extent possible, future land use designations, or changes to existing land use designations, should take into account the availability of water rights and an adequate water supply as this information becomes available.
16. The County should maintain open space corridors between urban growth areas and areas of more intensive rural development to prevent sprawl and to preserve wildlife corridors. Mechanisms to permanently protect such corridors, such as purchase of development rights, zoning, and critical area regulation should be pursued. (See Chapter 9, Natural Environment for additional policies regarding greenspaces and open space corridors.)
17. The County should discourage incompatible uses adjacent to general aviation public use airports. Incompatible land uses may include residential, multi-family, height hazards, uses that attract large concentrations of people, wildlife hazards, and special uses such as schools, hospitals and nursing homes, and explosive/hazardous materials. The County should consult with the Washington State Department of Transportation Aviation Division when amending policies or regulations that would affect public airports.
18. Siting of uses adjacent to Fort Lewis should take into account noise impacts from the base.

OBJECTIVE B: Housing and Residential Densities in Rural Areas - County requirements and programs for housing in rural areas should encourage residential development that is compatible with small scale as well as commercially-significant farming, forestry, aquaculture, open space, outdoor recreation, rural service levels, and generally with the rural character where human use does not overbalance the natural environment. Use of innovative techniques in addition to zoning designations provides a variety of densities in rural areas.

POLICIES:

1. A variety of rural densities should be provided to accommodate the wide variety of rural land uses that comprise the rural character.
2. Thurston County may not expand beyond the logical outer boundary that existed in 1990 or intensify beyond the 1990 rural residential land use designations or zoning districts that permit densities greater than 1 dwelling unit per 5 acres. Areas of more intensive rural residential development shall be minimized and contained to avoid additional low density sprawl that is not compatible with rural character and service levels.
3. Within rural areas, proposed new residential development should not negatively affect land based and marine aquacultural activities and farm and forestry activities. Aquaculture activities should not be considered a nuisance if they are operating in a reasonable manner and within applicable regulations. In addition, buffers between

- the residential uses and aquaculture districts should be provided by the residential development.
4. Residential development adjacent to agriculture or forestry uses should be designed in a manner that minimizes potential conflicts and reduces unnecessary conversion of farm and forest land. Such mechanisms as clustering and buffering should be employed to reduce potential conflicts.
 5. Individual septic systems should be the method for handling residential sewage in rural areas. Only in areas of identified health hazards or water quality problems should sewer systems be permitted. In such cases, the county should be the sewer and water provider.
 6. Community water systems are required in unsewered areas where residential density exceeds one unit per acre, and for densities of one unit per two acres in areas of excessive porosity.
 7. Urban governmental services, as defined in the Growth Management Act, should generally not be extended outside urban growth areas, except in those limited circumstances shown to be necessary to protect basic public health and safety and the environment and when such services are financially supportable at rural densities and do not encourage urban development. This policy does not apply to rural governmental services as defined in the Growth Management Act, including domestic water supply, fire and police protection services, transportation and public transit services, and other public utilities associated with rural levels of development.
 8. Residential neighborhoods should be protected from incompatible land uses.
 - a. Neighborhood identity should be preserved by maintaining natural boundaries and recognizing significant archaeological and historic resources.
 - b. Vegetated buffers should be provided between arterials and residential developments, and between residential and non-residential land uses.
 9. The County should protect significant archaeological and historic resources through cluster development, overlay zoning, transfer of development rights, tax incentives, and other appropriate mechanisms.
 10. Rezoning of any parcel with a rural designation to a different designation should only occur when:
 - a. circumstances have substantially changed since the current land use designation/zoning was adopted and the definition, characteristics or locational guidelines for the current district no longer apply;
 - b. the rezone would promote the general welfare of the affected community;

- c. the rezone would maintain or enhance environmental quality; or
 - d. Thurston County pursues a legislative rezone.
11. If rezoning is requested for a portion of a land use designation:
- a. the impact of a proposed rezone on landowners remaining in the original designation should be evaluated and considered;
 - b. the proposed rezone should only be allowed if there is projected to be minimal adverse impact on neighboring landowners and on the continued use of a rural district for natural resource-based industries or conservation purposes;
 - c. regular, easily definable boundaries should be maintained; and
 - d. the rezoning should not increase the demand for urban levels of service.

GOAL 2: TO DESIGNATE URBAN GROWTH AREAS THAT CUMULATIVELY PROVIDE AREA AND DENSITIES SUFFICIENT TO PERMIT THE URBAN GROWTH THAT IS PROJECTED TO OCCUR IN THE COUNTY OVER THE SUCCEEDING 20 YEARS.

OBJECTIVE A: Designating Urban Growth Areas - Include in urban growth areas territory that is located outside of a city or town only if such territory is already characterized by urban growth or is adjacent to territory already characterized by urban growth.

POLICIES:

1. Urban growth areas should contain areas characterized by urban growth.
2. Urban growth areas should be served by or planned to be served by municipal utilities.
3. Urban growth areas should contain vacant land near existing urban areas that is capable of supporting urban development.
4. Urban growth areas should be designated so as to be compatible with the use of designated natural resource lands and critical areas.
5. Urban growth areas should follow logical boundaries and consider citizen preferences.
6. The county should attempt to reach agreement with each city and town on the location of an urban growth area within which the city or town is located.

7. Expansion of an urban growth boundary should ensure provision of transportation, municipal water and an adequate water supply for the succeeding 20 years in a manner that does not degrade the Puget Sound or waters flowing into it. North County jurisdictions¹⁴ must ensure that the area can be served by municipal sewer, and South County jurisdictions¹⁵ must demonstrate that the expansion area can be served by sewage disposal methods that provide for the effective treatment of waste water in a manner that does not degrade waters flowing into the Puget Sound in the succeeding 20 years.
 8. Expansion of an urban growth area boundary should meet one of the following two criteria:
 - a. There is insufficient land within the existing urban growth area to permit the urban growth that is forecast to occur in the succeeding 20 years; or
 - b. There can be shown an overriding public benefit to public health, safety and welfare by moving the urban growth boundary.
 9. The area that is designated for the expansion of any urban growth area should be contiguous to an existing urban growth boundary.
 10. Reductions in any urban growth boundary should ensure that sufficient land will remain within the reduced urban growth area to permit the urban growth that is forecast to occur in the succeeding 20 years including a reasonable market factor.
 11. A variety of densities and housing types should be provided in urban growth areas, with planned densities of four units per acre or higher, except where limited by physical constraints. The exact locations of housing densities are to be determined by joint plans or subarea plans.
 12. Expansion or reduction of any urban growth area should be compatible with the use of designated natural resource lands, designated archaeological and historic resources, and with critical areas.
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¹⁴ "North county jurisdictions" refers to growth areas around Lacey, Olympia and Tumwater

¹⁵ "South county jurisdictions" refers to growth areas around Yelm, Rainier, Tenino, Bucoda, and the Grand Mound Urban Growth Area.

13. The designation of or change to urban growth areas should be consistent with the Thurston County County-Wide Planning Policies.
14. In order to protect the supply of adequate water to rural area residents and natural resource industries, the County should consider mitigation methods for rural area water supplies that are purchased or transferred from the rural area for use in a city or urban growth area.

OBJECTIVE B: Planning Framework for Urban Growth Areas - Adopt and maintain a joint plan for each urban growth area around a city or town. For urban growth areas around unincorporated centers, the policy framework for urban growth should be embodied either in this Comprehensive Plan or subarea plan.

POLICIES:

1. The adopted joint plans will serve as the basis for County planning decisions and as the pre-annexation comprehensive plans for the cities to use when annexations are proposed within urban growth areas.
2. Compatible level of service standards for public services and facilities should be jointly adopted and maintained among jurisdictions within urban growth areas.
3. The County should support development consistent with joint plans.
4. For those UGAs that include incorporated and unincorporated areas, growth management agreements between the county and the municipalities should establish common standards for roads and utilities. The agreements should also establish that land use patterns adopted within the joint plan will be honored for a mutually agreeable period following adoption of the plan or annexation.
5. The County should coordinate its planning and development regulations with the cities for urban growth areas.

OBJECTIVE C: Accommodating Projected Growth - Concentrate medium and higher-intensity residential, commercial and industrial development in urban growth areas in a way that ensures livability and preservation of environmental quality, open space retention, varied and affordable housing, and high quality urban services at the least cost.

POLICIES:

1. Encourage infilling in areas already characterized by urban growth that have the capacity and provide public services and facilities to serve urban development.
2. Through the Buildable Lands Program, the County should ensure that average residential densities in urban growth areas are sufficient to enable the county as a

- whole to accommodate its 20-year population projection including a reasonable market factor.
3. Where urban services and utilities are not yet available, require development to be configured so urban development may eventually infill and become urban.
 4. Consider the use of innovative development techniques within urban growth areas, such as cluster housing and the transfer of development rights.
 5. Land use plans within UGAs should balance change with recognition of the distinct identities of neighborhoods and support variety and choice in living and working environments.
 6. Residential development in UGAs should include a variety of housing types. Overall densities should be high enough to support efficient public services and provide affordable housing choices, but there should be a variety of densities based on land capability, environmental sensitivity, and constraints in providing services. In areas where urban growth and sewer extensions are scheduled to take place later, residential development should be kept at very low densities for the short-term or developed in a manner that will not preclude later infilling at higher densities.
 7. Mining, forestry, farming, and related natural resource industries may occur in urban growth areas, but in the long-term can expect to be replaced by more intensive urban land uses and activities.
 8. Industrial and commercial development of all types may occur in urban growth areas, particularly the larger and more intensive types of development which require higher levels of public services and facilities. Within the urban growth areas around the incorporated towns, the industrial and larger commercial development should take place inside the towns themselves in order to support their roles as the economic centers of their areas.
 9. The highest levels of public services and facilities should be provided in urban growth areas, but may be provided at lesser levels in the smaller towns' urban growth areas. Some services and facilities may only be provided after areas incorporate or are annexed to adjacent cities or towns. These urban services and facilities may include water supply; sanitary and storm sewers; police and fire protection; paved streets with curbs, sidewalks and street lights; and public transit and bicycle paths. Other services may include community and neighborhood parks, government offices, libraries, medical facilities, manned fire stations, and animal control.
 10. Open space lands contributing to the livability of UGAs should be preserved, including those providing scenic amenity, community identity and buffers within and between urban and rural areas.

11. Reductions in any urban growth boundary should ensure that the reduced urban growth area will include effective sewer and water and transportation service areas, and will retain the ability to accommodate projected population growth for a 20-year period including a reasonable market factor.
12. Significant archeological and historic resources contributing to the sense of place, providing links to our past, and enhancing quality of life should be protected and preserved.
13. The County should weigh the need to accommodate projected growth in a particular area against the potential impacts of that growth on critical areas. Some areas of the County are not appropriate for urban growth due to the occurrence and/or sensitivity of critical areas or the possibility of creating a public safety hazard.

OBJECTIVE D: Annexations and Incorporations - The county should review annexations and incorporations for consistency with this Comprehensive Plan, effective sub-area plans and impacts on county land use, traffic circulation, public services and facilities and integrity and continuity of service areas and boundaries.

POLICIES:

1. Annexations should be supported within designated short-term urban growth areas of cities and towns, where short-term urban growth boundaries exist.
2. Annexations of unincorporated islands should be actively encouraged and creation of new unincorporated islands should be discouraged.
3. Annexations may not occur outside of designated urban growth areas.
4. Cities and towns may require an annexation commitment as a condition of utility service within designated short-term urban growth areas.
5. New city and town incorporations should provide adequate facilities and services for urban growth consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

GOAL 3: LAND USE PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING SHOULD ENSURE THE HIGHEST DEGREE OF PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY, AND GENERAL WELFARE WITHIN A QUALITY LIVING ENVIRONMENT WITHOUT UNDULY JEOPARDIZING THE RIGHTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL.

OBJECTIVE A: Citizen Participation in the Planning Process - An effective system to ensure participation by individuals and groups in planning and decision making should be maintained.

POLICIES:

1. The development and amendment of the Comprehensive Plan, including subarea plans and joint plans with cities shall involve residents of the area in the drafting of the plans.
2. Citizen opinion should be ascertained in advance of decision-making on major land use issues.
3. Meetings should be held in neighborhoods on major land use issues affecting those neighborhoods.
4. New land use policies and regulations should involve participation by the public and should reflect community interests and preferences for new development.
5. The county should provide adequate staff support to help persons seeking development permits and participating in permit review processes.
6. Development permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.
7. Communications between the county and citizen groups should be facilitated by providing information on programs, regulations, and development projects impacting various areas of the county.
8. The County should provide for public involvement early and continuously throughout the process of developing and amending plans and regulations and shall utilize a variety of public participation and information strategies.
9. The county should maintain lists of individuals, neighborhood groups, organizations and professional groups interested in land use should be maintained for use by all county departments to send notification of proposed programs, issues and actions relating to land use. Persons and groups should be advised of the listing service and given opportunity to participate.

OBJECTIVE B: Plans and Programs for the County's Physical Development - A system of coordinated plans should direct the county's physical development and provide the framework for a variety of implementing mechanisms.

POLICIES:

1. The Comprehensive Plan should serve as the master plan to guide the county's physical development and the preparation of the county's sub-area plans, joint plans and plans for special services, functions or issues.

The public should be notified when the Comprehensive Plan is being prepared, revised or amended. The Comprehensive Plan should be prepared with participation by interested individuals and groups.

2. Subarea plans can be used to identify the area-specific land use and transportation plans for geographic sub-areas of the county. Subarea plans should be developed consistent with the Comprehensive Plan as needed to accommodate unique features or needs of a discrete portion of the rural area, using the following principles:
 - a. Involvement of property owners and residents of the subarea, as well as any other interested persons and groups should be sought in the preparation of subarea plans;
 - b. The future land use pattern and transportation system prepared for subareas should be based on and consistent with, the goals, policies, and guidelines for land use and transportation planning established in the Comprehensive Plan;
 - c. The County should work with interested citizens to prepare the subarea plans. The Planning Commission should review the draft plans for consistency with the Comprehensive Plan's framework and guidelines, and for compatibility with neighboring areas.
 - d. Existing subareas should be periodically re-evaluated, and new subarea plans may be developed as needed.
3. Joint plans between the county and incorporated cities and towns should promote consistency and certainty about how the area will be planned and developed in the future. The plans should be prepared and used according to the following principles:
 - a. Participation in Joint Plan preparation should be sought by residents of the city/town, affected unincorporated area, and any other interested individuals and groups;
 - b. Joint plans should be adopted as part of the comprehensive plans of the cities, towns and county;
 - c. The future land use pattern and transportation systems identified in joint plans should be honored as development in the county and annexations to the cities/towns take place; and
 - d. Joint plans should provide for phasing of development and the orderly extension of city/town services and annexations.

4. Special function plans related to the county's physical development should be prepared for issues, services or functions provided by or subject to approval of county government. They should be developed according to the following principles:
 - a. Special function plans (e.g., plans for parks, sewage, solid waste, stormwater management, etc.) should be based on the framework for the county's physical development established in the Comprehensive Plan and joint plans. The goals, objectives, and policies set forth in the Comprehensive Plan should be followed; as should the intensity levels and location of land uses and transportation networks in sub-area plans still in effect and in joint plans; and
 - b. Special function plans may be prepared for the county as a whole, or for parts of the county, with boundaries to be based on the scope of the issue or service.
5. The County should continue to evaluate and periodically update subarea boundaries and plans for consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and the GMA.

OBJECTIVE C: Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan - Implement the Comprehensive Plan through county programs and regulations.

POLICIES:

1. The Thurston County Comprehensive Plan should be reviewed, evaluated, and revised periodically and as changing circumstances require. Such review includes an annual amendment process and the 7-year periodic review required under the GMA [RCW 36.70A.130(4)(a)].
2. Land use decisions should conform to adopted Comprehensive and Sub-Area plans still in effect.
3. Certainty, understanding, and efficiency of the permitting process should be promoted.
4. Granting of variances from development regulations should be minimized.
5. Regulations should be monitored to determine whether they are accomplishing their intended purposes.
6. Nonregulatory approaches, such as public education, should be considered in addition to regulation when exploring remedies to problems.
7. New planning policies and implementing regulations should reflect the need or problems they are intended to address.

8. Budgetary support should be provided to ensure that regulations are adequately administered and enforced, including investigation and prosecution of violations; implementation of permit conditions, zoning and other requirements; and coordination among county departments in the administration of permit conditions and other requirements.
9. Policies and procedures for civil enforcement should precede implementation of criminal enforcement.

OBJECTIVE D: Intergovernmental Cooperation - Systems to promote and ensure intergovernmental awareness and cooperation on county-wide goals should be instituted and maintained.

POLICIES:

1. Thurston County should cooperate with all governmental jurisdictions, including the Commander of the Fort Lewis military base, Indian Tribes within the county, and neighboring counties so that county-wide goals are achieved.
2. Land use decisions involving county lands adjacent to other jurisdictions should take into consideration the current land use and long-range goals of the neighboring jurisdictions. The County should provide adequate notification and opportunity to comment to adjacent jurisdictions prior to final action on a Comprehensive Plan or development regulation amendment. At a minimum, the County should provide notification to state agencies as listed by the Community Trade and Economic Development Department, and the Fort Lewis Base Commander, at least 60 days prior to final action on a Comprehensive Plan or development regulation amendment.