MEMORANDUM

TO: Chair Chris Lane and Members of the Thurston County Planning Commission

FROM: Chris Hawkins, Active Healthy Communities Coordinator

DATE: October 17, 2012

At the June 6 and July 18 meetings of the Thurston County Planning Commission, Thurston County Planning and Public Health & Social Services department staff presented you with the staff draft of a new Health and Human Services Chapter as a possible 2012 amendment to the Thurston County Comprehensive Plan. The comments and questions from the Commission at that time prompted further revision of the draft HHS Chapter to focus more on matters that relate to the growth management role of the Comprehensive Plan. A summary of changes and cross-referencing with the existing Comprehensive Plan policies, along with the revised draft, is attached. TCPHSS would like to discuss the revised draft HHS chapter with you and request your further consideration of the chapter, including the scheduling of the necessary deliberation before your recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners this year.

Amending the Thurston County Comprehensive Plan to include a chapter on Health and Human Services will bring health objectives more explicitly into the plan for our community’s future growth. The reason the health department and Board of Health consider this to be an important policy change is that much of the health of local residents, which we aim to improve and protect, depends on good community design, now and in the future.

Seventy percent of all deaths in the United States currently are caused by chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). Health data about local residents indicate that we are not
different from the rest of the country in this regard. These health conditions shorten the lives and affect the quality of life of many local residents and put a costly burden on our health care system. People can prevent these chronic diseases by engaging adequately in behaviors such as healthy eating, physical activity, and avoiding tobacco smoke. These are individual and family choices, but the community around us can either help or hinder the health behaviors of individuals and families. The most reliable means for the local health department to increase preventive behavior and reduce risks for these chronic diseases is to create community environments that support healthy behaviors as a matter of daily routine for as much of the population as possible - environments that make healthier choices easier for local residents. Thurston County's built environment, including places for residents to be active, eat healthfully and avoid tobacco smoke where they live, work and play, is guided and shaped by its comprehensive plan.

We appreciate the opportunity to discuss this further with you at your October 17, 2012 meeting.

cc: Jeremy Davis, Senior Planner