

Thurston County Comprehensive Plan Goals Summary

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

I. VISION FOR THURSTON COUNTY

People have chosen to live and work in Thurston County for many reasons. The county provides a diversity of environments and lifestyle choices such as urban, rural, and small town, all within a short distance of one another. The wholesome quality of life offered by the county includes a clean environment, job opportunities, easy access to work, recreation and shopping, regional health facilities, education and cultural activities, a variety of human services and a peaceful, uncrowded atmosphere.

Thurston County is anticipating continued high growth. That growth presents a challenge for the future. The county seeks to maintain and enhance its quality of life while achieving the benefits of growth and minimizing any negative side effects. The vision for Thurston County defines the future toward which the county is moving. It identifies how the county will respond to growth and change. This vision is expressed in terms of the following value statements [abbreviated].

- Support and Preserve the Human Environment
- Continue Commitment to Public Participation
- Preserve the Natural Environment, Water Quality and Open Spaces; Conserve the Natural Resource Base
- Promote Economic Health and Diversified Economic Activities
- Promote Variety and Accessibility of Living Environments
- Manage Growth Effectively
- Maintain and Improve a Safe, Effective Transportation System

CHAPTER 2 LAND USE

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.

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.

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.

CHAPTER 3 NATURAL RESOURCE LANDS

I. AGRICULTURE RESOURCES

Community vision: The residents of Thurston County envision a diverse and thriving agricultural industry that is able to respond quickly to changing market conditions. They recognize the essential role of land conservation and local food production in maintaining the quality of life and long-term sustainability of the community. **In addition, they recognize the multiple benefits provided by farmland, including wildlife habitat and flood control.** The community also recognizes that maintaining viable agricultural resources requires a partnership with the farming community.

The community as a whole takes responsibility for conserving prime farm lands, promoting local markets, minimizing incompatible land uses, and providing other community support. This includes support for regulatory processes that are sensitive to the needs of farmers and that recognize the need to protect the environment. Farmers take responsibility for preserving soil fertility and ground and surface water quality, and for promoting a land stewardship ethic for existing and future generations.

Goal 1: Agriculture land should be preserved in order to ensure an adequate land base for long-term farm use. (this applies to all agricultural land)

Goal 2: Agricultural land of long-term commercial significance should be conserved.

Goal 3: Aquaculture growing areas should be protected and preserved in order to ensure an adequate resource base for long-term use.

Goal 4: Forest lands should be conserved in order to maintain a viable forestry industry while protecting environmental values.

Goal 5: Forest lands of long-term commercial significance should be conserved in order to ensure an adequate land base and discourage incompatible uses.

Goal 6: Rural forest lands enrolled in a current use tax assessment program should be protected from pressures to convert to other uses.

Goal 7: Mineral resource lands of long-term commercial significance should be allowed to be used by extraction industries, with minimal harm to the environment.

CHAPTER 4 HOUSING

Goal 1: Enough housing should be available to meet the housing needs of the existing and projected population of the county including rental and purchase opportunities for all income levels.

Goal 2: To promote safe and decent housing alternatives that meet the changing population needs and are in close proximity to jobs, transportation, and daily activities.

Goal 3: To meet the housing requirements of special needs populations in the county.

Goal 4: To preserve and maintain existing affordable housing, enhance the quality of substandard housing, and to provide decent and affordable housing in Thurston county.

CHAPTER 5 TRANSPORTATION

Goal 1: Provide transportation systems that enhance the health, safety and welfare of Thurston county citizens.

Goal 2: Provide transportation systems that support and complement the land use element of the Thurston county comprehensive plan, and are consistent with, and work to meet the goals of the regional transportation plan.

Goal 3: Provide mobility for all citizens regardless of age, handicap or income.

Goal 4: Efficiently provide publicly accepted levels of service.

Goal 5: Allow the state-wide and interstate movement of goods, services and passengers.

Goal 6: Maintain compatible relationships between airfields and landing strips and surrounding land uses.

CHAPTER 6 CAPITAL FACILITIES PLAN (2017-2022)

Goal 1: As the county grows, public facilities and services should be provided at reasonable costs, in places and at levels commensurate with planned development intensity and environmental protection, and built to be adequate to serve development without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards.

Goal 2: Every citizen should have safe and convenient access to educational facilities.

Goal 3: To provide adequate, well-located public lands and facilities.

CHAPTER 7 UTILITIES

Goal 1: To facilitate private utility services at the appropriate levels to accommodate the demand associated with current and future land uses. Such services should be provided in a manner that maximizes public safety and minimizes potential adverse environmental impacts.

Goal 2: Provide for stormwater management in a manner that protects environmental quality and avoids increasing the risk of damage from natural hazards.

Goal 3: Provide for the management of solid waste and hazardous wastes on a county-wide basis, including planning for facilities and services.

CHAPTER 8 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal 1: support sustainable business and industrial development which (1) strengthens and diversifies the economic base; (2) creates jobs and economic opportunities for all citizens; and (3) develops and operates in a manner that maintains a high-quality of life and environment.

CHAPTER 9 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

D. FREQUENTLY FLOODED AREAS

GOAL: protect life and structures from flood hazards and retain the flood storage, transmission capacity, and habitat value of floodplains.

OBJECTIVE: To provide the highest degree of flood protection at the least cost.

POLICIES:

1. The county should provide the highest degree of flood protection at the least cost through identification and accommodation of natural flooding and channel migration processes that pose hazards to life or property. Protection and management should be based on best available science and cumulative impact assessments of existing and planned future land and resource uses within the floodplains, channel migration zones, and watersheds.
2. The county should prohibit development and emplacement of fill in floodways and floodplains, except to the minimum extent necessary to accommodate public infrastructure and utilities that cannot be accommodated elsewhere and to stabilize channels against erosion in order to protect existing agricultural lands, public roads and bridges, public infrastructure, utilities and significant private structures, and to achieve habitat enhancement. Any development in the floodways should be designed to avoid habitat degradation. Stream bank stabilization, if necessary, should be of a type that maintains or enhances habitat functions. Rip-rap and other hard armoring should only be used if there is no effective alternative, based on sound engineering principles, to protect existing structures or public facilities.
3. The county should provide for land uses such as forestry, open space, public recreation, existing agriculture and water-dependent uses in areas subject to river flooding to minimize risks to life and structures and help retain or enhance habitat functions. Other uses and development in the floodplain should be restricted to minimize public safety risks (e.g., through compensating design features) and loss of habitat function.
4. The county should minimize disruption of long-term stream channel migration processes that allow formation of essential habitat features by prohibiting construction of new structures in channel migration zones and minimizing streambank stabilization.
5. The county should actively participate in the multi-jurisdictional flood hazard reduction efforts within the Chehalis River Basin.
6. The county should regulate uses in and around areas where groundwater periodically surfaces as necessary to avoid property damage and protect groundwater quality.
7. The county should maintain the county's enrollment in the Community Rating System through the National Flood Insurance Program.

ACTION NEEDS:

1. Review and amend as necessary the frequently flooded areas section of the Critical Area regulations at least every five years to reflect best available science, relevant new information, the results of project monitoring and evaluation, and cumulative impact assessments of current and planned future land and resource uses within and near frequently flooded areas.
2. Map floodways, floodplains, channel migration zones and areas subject to high groundwater flooding with the greatest degree of accuracy possible.
3. Install and maintain flood elevation poles and gauges along major rivers and within designated groundwater flood hazard areas.
4. Create maps depicting projected flood inundation from possible failure of the Skookumchuck Dam on the Skookumchuck River and the Alder and La Grande dams on the Nisqually River.
5. Develop management programs to avoid or minimize flooding risks for existing and future land uses. This could include a range of measures including regulation and compensation for the removal of structures subject to frequent flooding.
6. Prioritize properties in the floodplain to purchase in the event federal money becomes available for that purpose.
7. Prioritize residences in the 100-year floodplain that the county would help elevate if state or federal monies become available for that purpose.
8. Identify structures and properties subject to repeated flooding that are not already listed by FEMA.

CHAPTER 10 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

Goal 1: The county should promote and encourage preservation of its archaeological and historic resources

CHAPTER 11 Health and Human Services

Goal HHS - EH -1: To protect and preserve groundwater quality and drinking water supplies.

Goal HHS - EH-2: To ensure surface waters are protected from pollution so they are safe for water recreation and shellfish harvesting.

Goal HHS - EH-3: To ensure wastes are managed so as to protect public health and water resources.

Goal HHS -N-1: To improve places where people purchase food or eat in Thurston county, making healthy options accessible to all local residents.

Goal HHS -PA-1: To create environments for active living, fostering changes to the community environment and associated policies that increase physical activity.

Goal HHS -T-1: To eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke.