Thurston County is one of the fastest growing counties in the state. The quality of life in our communities is what draws so many people here. We enjoy small town living surrounded by rivers, lakes, trails, mountains and ocean. We have the benefit of the jobs and cultural opportunities that a state capital brings. It is a quality of life we cherish and it is what makes buying a home and raising a family in Thurston County so attractive.

There are more than a quarter of a million residents living here now and the population is expected to increase by 120,000 by 2035. That is like adding the population of three Lacey’s in the next 22 years! Where are they going to go and how are we planning for that growth so we maintain our quality of life?

Thurston Regional Planning Council’s “Sustainable Thurston” provides opportunities for everyone in the community to contribute their ideas. Thousands of residents have already provided input by attending community workshops, answering surveys and participating online. Ideas shared have been reviewed by leaders from throughout the region to help shape the plans and actions toward a more sustainable future.

REALTORS® know the community is a backdrop for the homes we help market; home buyers want a safe neighborhood with good roads and sidewalks and trails to walk on. Parks nearby increase home values and the preservation of the natural environment makes a neighborhood more attractive for families. Jobs close to homes help shorten commutes and increase family time. Plenty of housing options allow families to find a home that suits their needs and budgets.

For those reasons, I have served on a housing panel for “Sustainable Thurston” to provide insight for a housing plan that reflects community needs and values. This unique community involvement and visioning project provides opportunities for everyone in the area to contribute their ideas on roads, public safety, water, schools, human services, economic development and more for the future of Thurston County.

Soon, there will be a regional plan published that has taken into account the public input. The plan will be released around the week of August 5, 2013 and you will be able to comment on it yourself. Help shape our community by getting involved. You can find more information at “Sustainable Thurston” at www.sustainablethurston.org.

*Note: Not all real estate professionals are REALTORS®; look for the REALTOR® logo when choosing your broker. It indicates they belong to the National Association of REALTORS® and pledge to adhere to a strict Code of Ethics.

What will your neighborhood look like in 20 years? With a public envisioning project called “Sustainable Thurston” you don’t have to be the mayor or on the city council to take part and determine how our communities grow.