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ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:

Lacey Fire District #3
Puget Sound Regional Council
TCOMM9-1-1
The Evergreen State College
Thurston Economic
Development Council
Timberland Regional Library

MEMORANDUM

TO: Population and Employment Forecast Advisory Group
FROM: Veena Tabbutt, Senior Planner *VMT*
DATE: January 17, 2014
SUBJECT: Draft Buildable Lands Report

PURPOSE

Review of the draft Buildable Lands Report for Thurston County.

OVERVIEW

Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC) staff have been tasked with updating the Buildable Lands Report for Thurston County. This report is a requirement of the Growth Management Act. The last report for Thurston County was published in 2007, with an update due no later than June 30, 2015. Due to the lack of state funding, the Thurston Regional Planning Council decided to fund an abbreviated report to ensure that jurisdictions will continue to be in compliance with the Growth Management Act.

The report draws heavily on the assumptions and data developed during the recent update of the Population and Employment forecast. The report represents "Baseline" conditions, or an analysis based on policies and regulations that are adopted by local jurisdictions. It does not take into account the strategies and targets developed during the Sustainable Thurston project, as they have not yet been implemented by local jurisdictions.

The Buildable Lands Program in Thurston County must answer two key growth-related questions. The first is whether residential development in the urban growth areas is occurring at the densities envisioned in local comprehensive plans. The second is whether there is an adequate land supply in the urban growth areas for anticipated future growth in population and employment.



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Draft Buildable Lands Report Findings

1. *Are urban densities being achieved in the urban growth areas?*

- Overall, Thurston County urban jurisdictions are achieving urban densities greater than the rule of thumb threshold of four dwelling units per acre.
- Individually, all Thurston County urban areas with sewer service are achieving urban densities. (For health code reasons, densities must be lower than four units per acre when sewer service is not available.)
- Achieved densities are higher within city limits (incorporated areas) than the unincorporated growth area.

2a. *Is there enough residential land in the urban growth areas to accommodate the 20 year growth projection?*

Based on adopted policies in place in Thurston County as of mid-year 2012, the evaluation shows that:

- There is sufficient land supply to accommodate 20 years of projected population growth in Thurston County's urban areas (cities plus unincorporated growth areas or UGAs), and
- Each urban jurisdiction in Thurston County has designated sufficient land supply to accommodate 20 years of projected population growth.

2b. *Is there enough commercial/industrial land in the urban areas to accommodate the 20 year job projection?*

The evaluation shows that there is enough vacant, partially-used and redevelopable land to support the 20 year job growth forecast for urban areas in Thurston County.

The supply varies by jurisdiction. Each jurisdiction has a vision for how they plan to grow, which is laid out in their comprehensive plans. Olympia, for instance, has very little vacant industrial land compared to Tumwater and Lacey. Taking the three cities together, there is ample space for attracting manufacturing or warehousing jobs. All three cities have sufficient space for jobs in the commercial sector, however redevelopment is likely to occur more often in Olympia as there is less vacant land. Reuse of empty buildings and redevelopment of underutilized parcels is considered in the land supply analysis, especially in the core urban areas and along major transit corridors where redevelopment is more likely to occur.

Yelm has seen steady job growth over the last few decades, and has designated adequate land supply to accommodate future growth.

Rainier's long range plans include annexing parts of their unincorporated growth area and rezoning it to commercial or industrial uses.

Questions remain as to how much of Tenino's and Tumwater's commercial and industrial land supply will be available for development due to the pending federal endangered species listings. Similar questions arise for Grand Mound.

Forecasting future need for industrial and commercial land is much more complex than residential forecasts. A robust land supply requires a full range of options for potential businesses – from unimproved land, to land with infrastructure already available, to existing and vacant buildings.

Other Considerations

Is there Too Much Land in the Urban Growth Areas?

This question is not part of the “buildable lands” review requirement, and will be fully addressed during the Urban Growth Area review undertaken by counties every ten years under the State’s Growth Management Act. However, the data in the supply versus demand table shows not only the excess capacity within the urban growth areas is **sufficient to accommodate projected growth**, but also that the growth areas are not too large based on the criteria established by Thurston County. It falls within the range of the established reasonable market factor.

Residential Supply versus Demand

Jurisdiction	2010 Dwelling Units	DEMAND		SUPPLY	
		Units required to Accommodate 2035 Population		Capacity for Additional Dwellings 2010 Plus	Percent Excess 2035
		Total	2010-2035		
Bucoda & UGA	240	460	220	350	37%
Lacey & UGA	31,740	45,560	13,820	17,560	21%
Olympia & UGA	26,950	40,410	13,460	16,880	20%
Rainier & UGA	770	1,300	530	750	29%
Tenino & UGA	750	1,550	800	1,200	33%
Tumwater & UGA	10,570	19,170	8,600	11,010	22%
Yelm & UGA	3,050	10,250	7,200	10,310	30%
Grand Mound UGA	380	690	310	430	28%
Total Urban Areas	74,450	119,390	44,940	58,490	23%

Sustainable Thurston Considerations

Over the next several years jurisdictions will re-examine zoning and development regulations as part of their comprehensive plan updates. At that time they may recommend adjustments to the urban growth area boundary. At that time the effect on the urban buildable lands supply will be evaluated, and that information will be provided to the decision makers.