

# Community

The places we create and spaces we preserve reflect the values of our diverse and dynamic community. In the coming decades, we will give urban residents greater access to a full range of housing and transportation options, as well as protect rural lifestyle choices and resource lands.



What are we today? What is our vision for the future? How will we get there? Answering these questions creates the foundation of our sustainability plan. The discussion starts with understanding how communities' land-use and transportation decisions shape development patterns. The way we use land and our transportation network form the bones of our communities and are hard to change once in place.



Opportunities for infill, redevelopment, reshaping, and revitalizing our communities can occur as growth continues over time. But growth also puts pressure on the natural environment where the consequences to clean water, air, farms, and forest land can be substantial. We explored these tensions during the development of this plan.

### What are we today?

Our region — home of Washington’s capital city — is a small-sized county located at the southern end of Puget Sound. The rural areas contain active forestlands — both publicly and privately owned — small farms, natural prairies, and a portion of the Joint Base Lewis-McChord military reservation, which is rural in character. Two tribal reservations — largely rural — are within our county borders. The character of our region changes from north to south. In the north is our larger urban area — the three-city region of Lacey-Olympia-Tumwater. In the south are smaller communities separated by rural areas — Bucoda, Grand Mound, Rainier, Rochester, Tenino, and Yelm. Each faces different opportunities and challenges for the future.

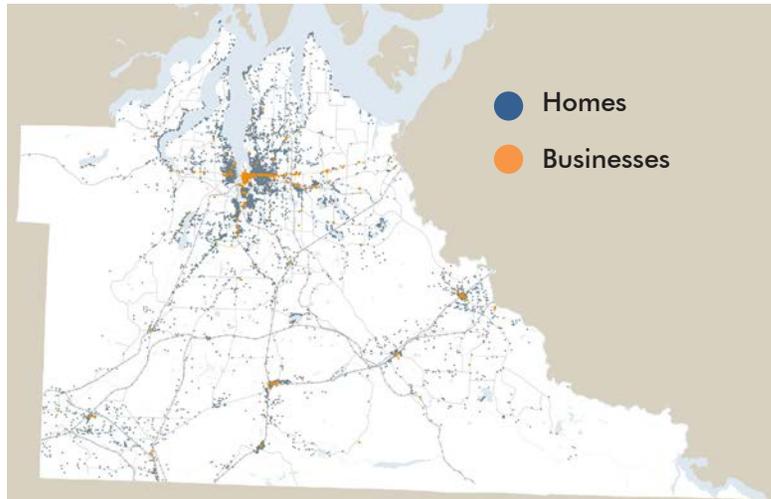
### How did land-use and transportation decisions create today's growth patterns?

Growth patterns generally follow transportation access and allowed zoning. In 1950, growth remained fairly compact. By 1970, Interstate 5 had been built and growth spread out as more and better roads

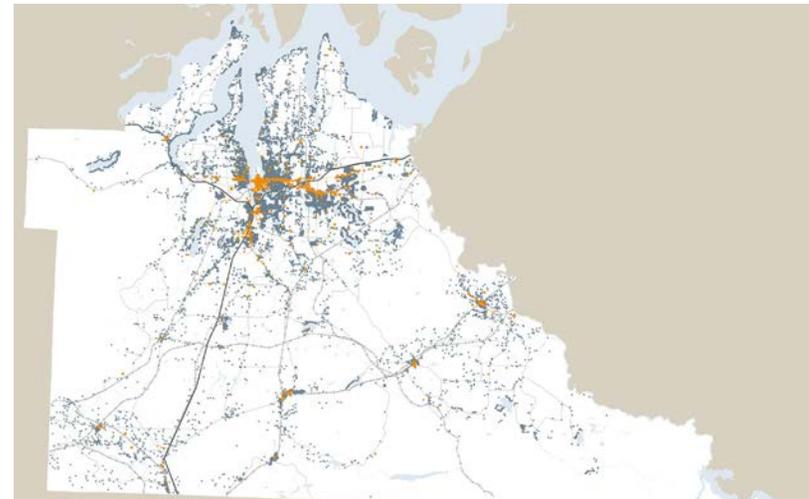
provided ready access to undeveloped land. By 1990, decades of sprawl development, encouraged by continued expansion of roads and allowed by zoning codes, resulted in the passage of the Growth Management Act (GMA) in 1990.

The GMA mandated planning for projected growth in a compact urban form that could be served as efficiently as possible and preserving of rural and resource lands, including farms and forest lands. GMA planning made a difference, but not as much as envisioned in the local and regional plans. It turned out to be much more difficult than anticipated to curb sprawl, create vitality in cities and towns, and preserve rural areas. The goals and actions that follow identify what needs to occur if jurisdictions and the region are going to realize the Sustainable Thurston Vision.

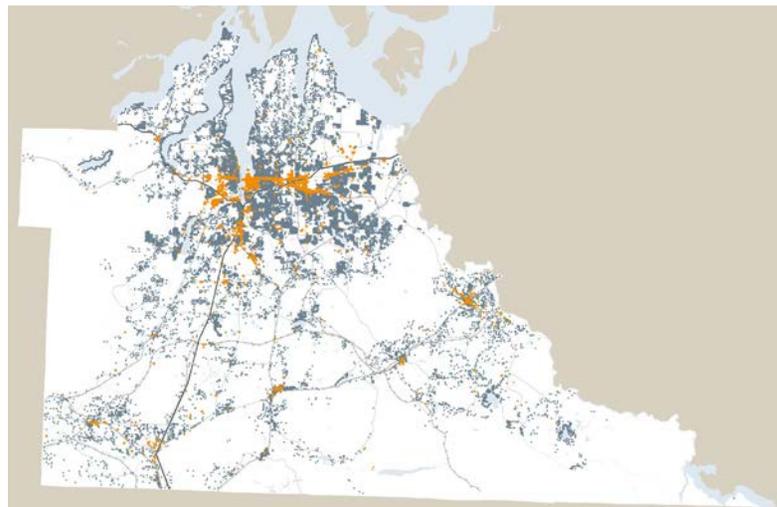
Thurston County, Wash. — land-use growth patterns (TRPC)



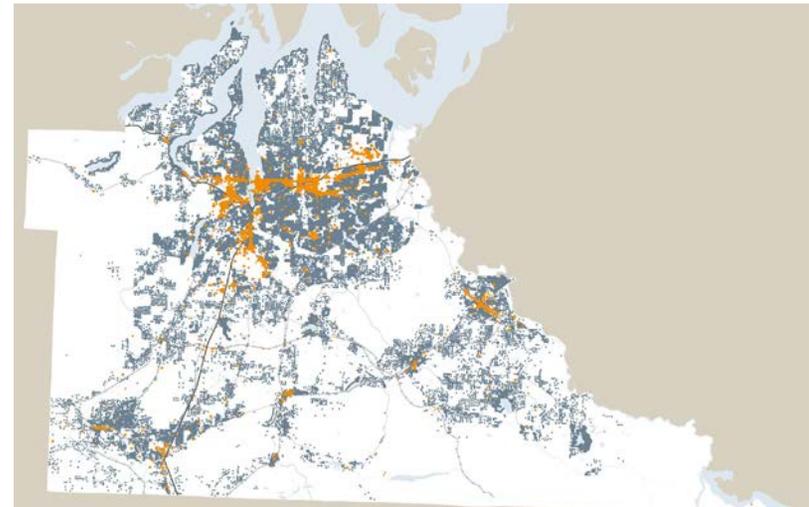
1950... compact communities around Puget Sound, major roads, and railroads



1970... after construction of Interstate 5 growth begins to increase



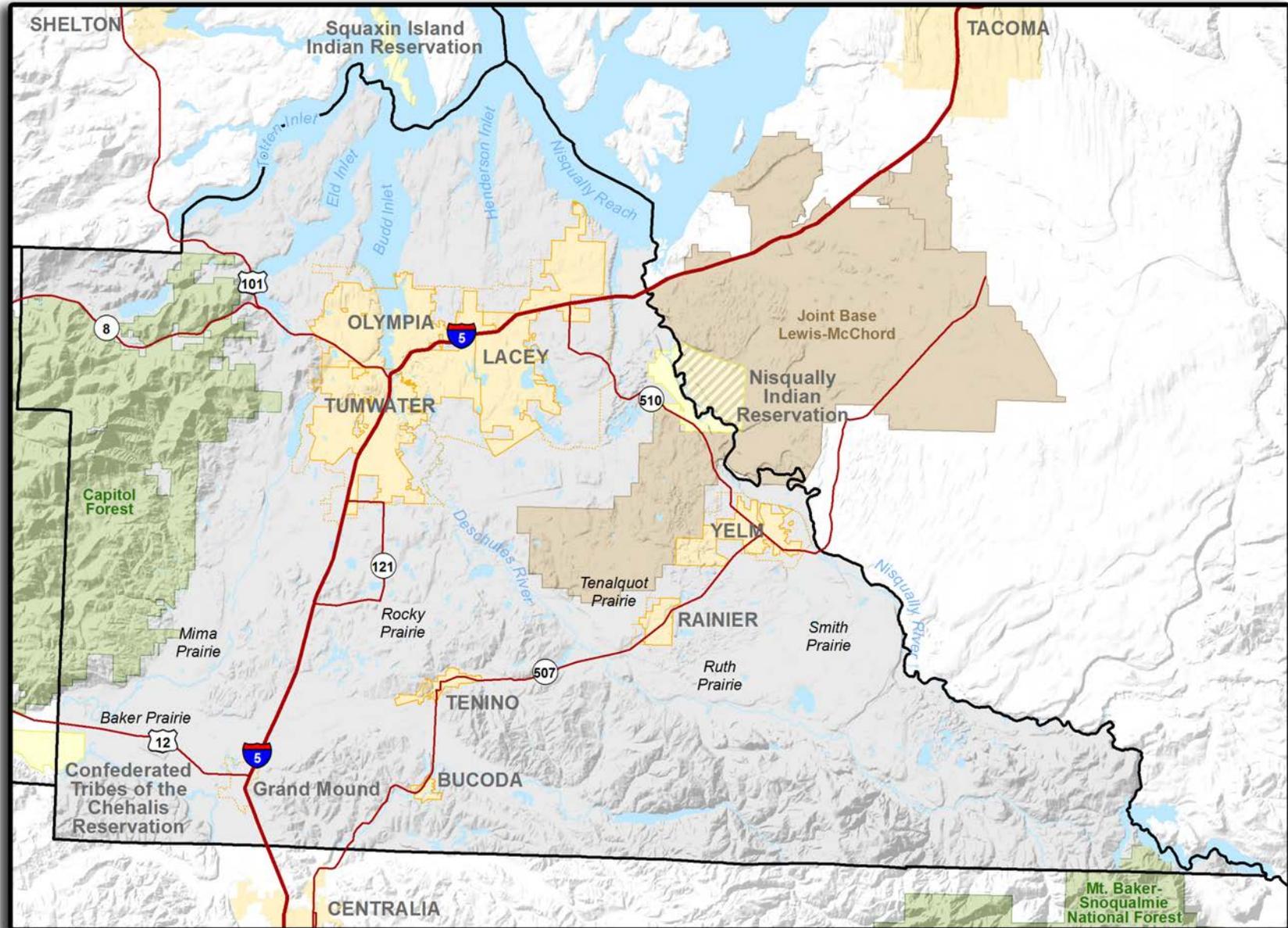
1990... decades of sprawl result in the state passing the Growth Management Act



2010... changes in zoning designations did protect some rural areas, however, residential growth in suburban and rural areas continued while city centers attracted little new activity



*Farming southeast of Lacey's urban growth area.*



Thurston County map.

## What is our vision for the future?

*In one generation, the Thurston Region's built environment will transition to unique, recognizable places and neighborhoods, fostering a sense of community, supporting a robust economy, and protecting farmlands and natural areas. City and town centers in Bucoda, Grand Mound, Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater, Rainier, Tenino, Rochester, and Yelm will develop or grow into thriving business districts, all with a walkable, well-designed urban form that encourages a mix of housing, goods, services, and places to recreate. Some neighborhoods that are closer in will have greater access to goods and services, as well as increased opportunities for housing choices to fit the needs of the changing population. We'll pay greater attention to design, walkability, accessibility, and affordability — all essential to meet the needs of an aging population and to attract and retain innovators in our community. Suburban, single-family neighborhoods will provide housing choices for families and others that value quiet neighborhoods with private spaces. The rural areas will remain a mixture of rural homes, farms, forest lands, and natural areas, with markedly lower densities of residential growth than the urban area.*

## What will the future look like under current plans?

The partners first considered the future given current land-use plans and zoning regulations — the Baseline Future.<sup>1</sup> Using the best information available and the adopted population forecast for 2035 analysis shows that existing land-use plans will lead to the following<sup>2</sup>:

- 32 percent loss of farmlands to urbanization — some 15,600 acres — compared to a vision of producing a greater proportion of our food locally and protecting farmlands;
- 10 percent loss of forest lands to urbanization — around 19,300 acres — compared to a vision of maintaining forest canopy to preserve water quality and stream health;
- 13 percent of growth going into the rural areas, contributing to the loss of forestlands, farms, and prairies, resulting in growth patterns that are difficult to serve with infrastructure and services, and straining limited resources;
- Difficulty attracting enough growth to our urban and town centers to create the envisioned vibrant places that will attract and support innovators and creative people to help foster a strong economy;
- Only a slight increase in activity and density in our major transit corridors — areas that are our best opportunity to support enhanced transit service in the future;
- Only a slight increase in our jobs/housing balance, compared to a vision of areas where we can live, work, play, and shop;
- Difficulty achieving the neighborhood centers envisioned in the larger city's comprehensive plans — places that offer destinations close to home and a few goods and services;

- Concerns over water availability to sustain people while protecting the environment; and,
- Concerns over increased energy use and ability to meet the state’s targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled.

**What will we achieve under the Sustainable Thurston vision?**

In contrast, the Preferred Land-Use Scenario presents an alternative future and will result in the following measurable benefits compared to the current trends shown in the Baseline Future:

**Greater Efficiency in the Delivery of Services and Provision of Infrastructure**

- 95 percent of growth locating in areas designated for urban growth — the cities, towns, designated urban growth areas and tribal reservations;
- An increase in activity density (people plus jobs) in higher-frequency transit corridors approaching a level that may support an enhanced level of transit service; and,
- \$1.6 billion savings in road, water, sewer, and other related infrastructure to support residential development, and additional savings in future maintenance costs (it costs \$250,000-\$500,000 every 10-15 years to maintain a lane mile of road).

**Greater Access to Jobs, Shopping, Food, and Services**

- A better mix of jobs and housing in the county as a whole will lead to a 16 percent reduction of 1990 levels of vehicle miles traveled based on land-use changes alone;
- 43 percent of the population living within a quarter-mile of transit service; and,
- 72 percent of urban households living within a half-mile of goods and services.

**More Efficient Use of Resources**

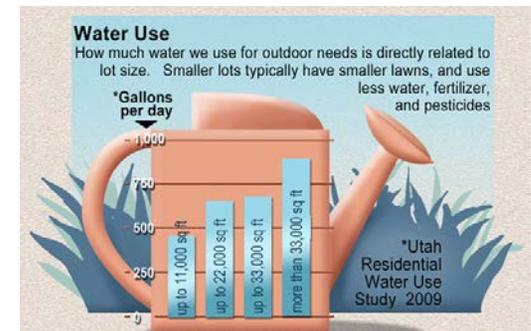
- 33 percent reduction in developed land consumption compared to the Baseline Future;
- 11 percent reduction of 2010 levels in per-household water use through land-use changes alone; and a 45 percent reduction when conservation measures are included, leading to a 21 percent decrease in total residential water consumption while accommodating growth;



Cost of Infrastructure: Compact communities need fewer miles of roads, water lines, and other infrastructure.



The Preferred Land-Use Scenario calls for a greater mix of jobs and housing. Commuting to work accounts for a large part of household travel, so increasing housing near job opportunities will result in shorter commutes.



The Preferred Land-Use Scenario calls for a more compact form of development — or a greater proportion of growth to be accommodated in multifamily units or in homes with smaller lots. This means less lawn and landscaping per person.

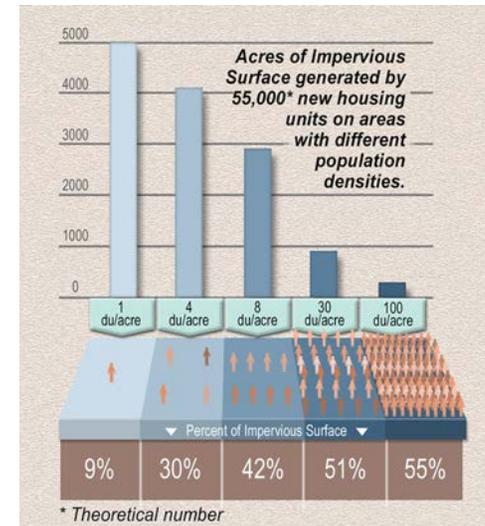
- 28 percent reduction of 2010 levels in per-household energy consumption through land-use changes alone; and a 39 percent reduction when conservation measures are included, leading to an 11 percent decrease in total energy consumed by households while accommodating growth;
- No net loss of forestlands; and,
- No net loss of rural farmlands

### Greater Protection of Environmental Quality

- 34 percent reduction in new impervious area compared to the Baseline Future in protected stream basins, and a 31 percent reduction in new impervious area compared to Baseline Future in sensitive stream basins; and,
- 38 percent reduction in residential carbon dioxide emissions per household, leading to a 10 percent reduction in total carbon dioxide emissions from residential uses compared to 2010.

### Some benefits of the Preferred Land-Use Scenario are less quantifiable:

- Creating vital urban places will foster an innovative and entrepreneurial economy. By integrating land uses, increasing transportation options, increasing housing density and employment intensity, our urban areas will become more economically productive. This will reduce unemployment, increase wages, and make our economy more resilient. One study showed that doubling population density led to a 6 percent increase in labor productivity and a 15 percent increase in economic productivity.<sup>3</sup>

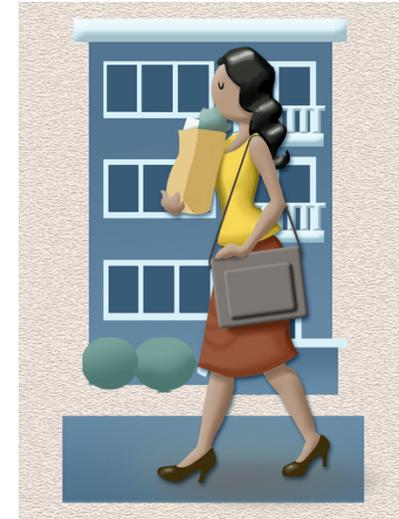


Runoff from impervious surfaces, such as roads and parking lots, can degrade water quality. Compact growth, such as the Preferred Land-Use Scenario, creates less impervious surface on a per-person basis, making urban stormwater more efficient to treat and protecting rural stream basins.



Long-term job creation begins with small businesses that grow over time within the region. To attract the "innovators" who grow businesses, a community must have vital urban places and activities.

- Focusing on walkable urban places and economic and social factors, such as employment, community safety, income, and education, will have positive outcomes on personal health. According to the County Health Rankings Model, 50 percent of health outcomes relate to social and economic factors (education, employment, income, family and social support, and community safety constitute 40 percent, while the built environment and environmental quality constitute 10 percent). The other factors are health behaviors (30 percent) and clinical care (20 percent).
- Reducing cost burden. Twenty-four percent of Thurston Region households spend more on housing than they can afford — or are “cost-burdened.”<sup>4</sup> Of our low-to-moderate-income households (those earning less than 80 percent of median income), 64 percent spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing. One-third pays more than 50 percent. This group is considered severely cost-burdened and at risk of becoming homeless. The Preferred Land-Use Scenario focuses on measures to reduce transportation and energy costs, increase economic opportunities, and increase access to food. These measures will lead to households that are more able to meet their basic needs.
- Fostering a sense of community. In a recent survey<sup>5</sup> for the Sustainable Thurston project, 85 percent of respondents contended that working together as a region to plan for the future would lead to an improved quality of life. Sixty-six percent believed that actions and participation as individuals could affect the planning and future of the region.



Walkable communities, such as those envisioned in centers and corridors and the neighborhood centers described in the Preferred Land-Use Scenario, will contribute to positive community health outcomes.



*Reducing cost burden means reducing how much we pay for our daily needs relative to how much we earn. Compact communities, such as those envisioned in the Preferred Land-Use Scenario, call for housing in areas with increased and more affordable transportation choices — walking and transit — and greater energy efficiency.*

## What steps are needed?

The Preferred Land-Use Scenario imagines that we create vibrant centers, corridors, and neighborhood centers while protecting rural residential lands, farmlands, prairies, and forest lands. Many of the actions needed to achieve this future are outlined in this and subsequent chapters but can be summarized as:

1. Focus on creating or enhancing walkable urban city and town centers in Bucoda, Grand Mound, Lacey, Olympia, Rainier, Rochester, Tenino, Tumwater, and Yelm. These places create the vital centers of our community, foster economic development and an innovative culture, and offer places to live, work, shop, and play.
2. Transition auto-oriented transit corridors into a more walkable urban form and seek opportunities for housing and a mix of services and amenities. These “nodes” along the corridor include the city centers and smaller clusters of activity at regular intervals.
3. Increase sustainable economic development activities, focusing on opportunities identified in the Economy chapter. Increase commercial infill and redevelopment in city and town centers and along major transit corridors. Look for opportunities for neighborhood commercial centers where appropriate.
4. Increase the range and choice of housing, especially in areas with access to goods and services such as transit. Focus on moderate, or “gentle,” density and accessible housing choices for neighborhoods to meet the needs of our changing demographics.
5. Rethink current low-density residential-only zoning districts in the urban areas. These districts encourage development to occur at densities too low for transit service, creating large neighborhoods with very few transportation options, which are often far away from jobs, goods, and services.
6. Use the remaining urban land supply more efficiently.
  - Take a comprehensive look at the vacant land supply, especially in the unincorporated urban growth area, and remove any areas from consideration that are not suitable for urban development because of environmental reasons, such as high groundwater, large amounts of wetlands, or steep slopes.
  - Assess the cost of extending infrastructure to the remainder of the urban growth areas, and consider the full costs of maintenance when determining appropriate areas for urban growth. Place areas within the unincorporated growth area without urban infrastructure (sewer or water lines) or with no specific plans to extend infrastructure into longer-term holding zones or lower-density development.

7. Increase opportunities for urban agriculture while accommodating growth.
8. Take into account property rights, vesting, and reasonable use of property. Since we have about a 10-to-12-year supply (TRPC estimate<sup>1</sup>) of residential lots and multifamily projects either permitted, vested, or proposed, work with property owners to encourage new development that supports the preferred land-use vision when possible.
9. Inventory and assess farmlands, forest lands, prairies, and other rural lands, and take steps such as re-examining rural zoning, create workable transferring or purchasing development rights programs, providing economic incentives, and improving the farm economy to protect the rural character of the Thurston Region.

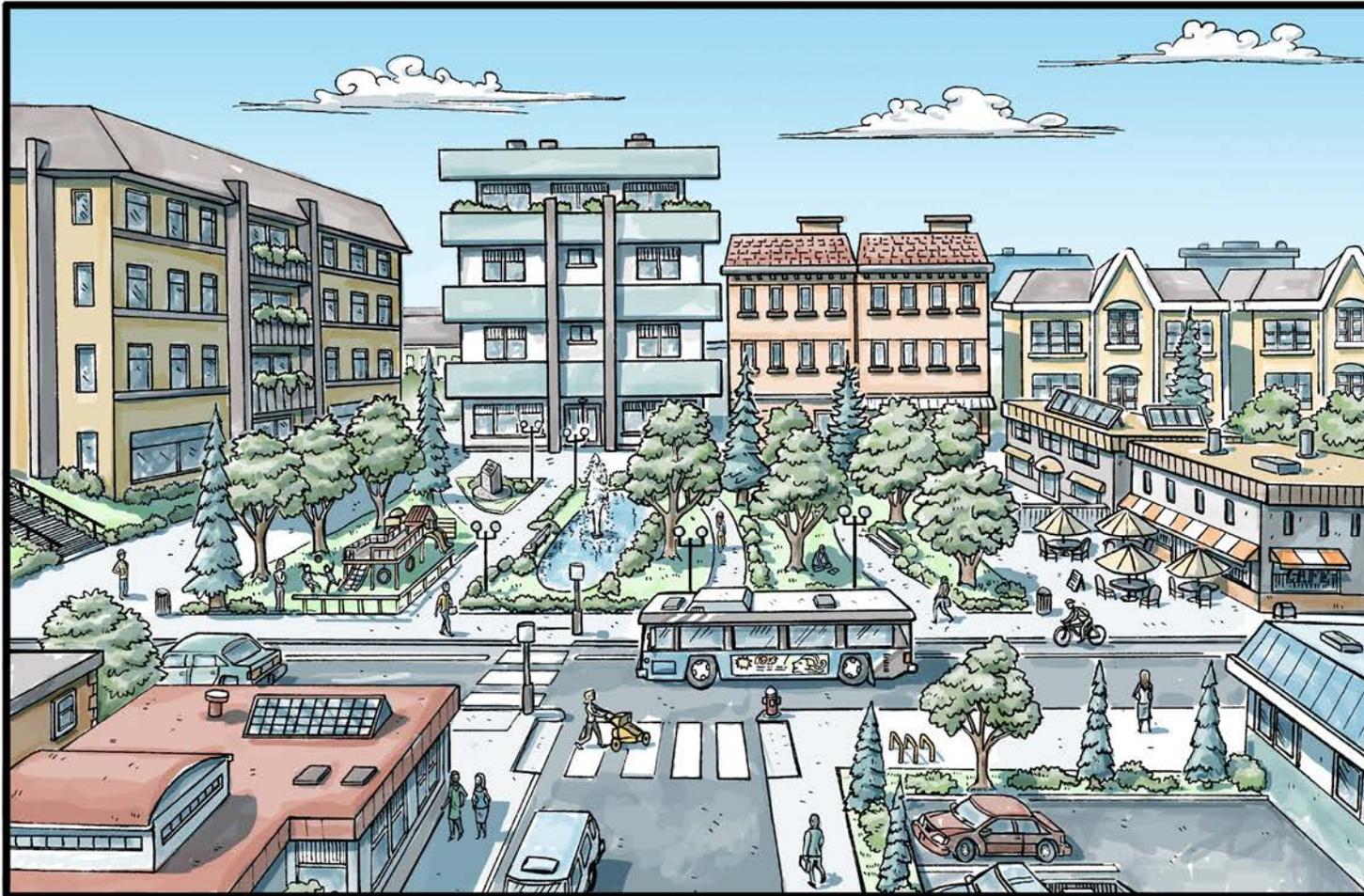
The remainder of this chapter looks at four types of places that constitute the built and natural environment of the Thurston Region:

- Northern Thurston County's urban area, composed of Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater and the transit corridors that link the city centers;
- Southern Thurston County's cities and towns and rural communities — Bucoda, Grand Mound, Rainier, Rochester, Tenino, and Yelm — separated by rural lands;
- Neighborhoods that surround the centers in both northern and southern Thurston County; and,
- Rural and resource lands.

### Sustainable Thurston Foundational Principles & Policies related to Community:

- Build and maintain distinct communities;
- Preserve and enhance the character and identity of existing urban, suburban, and rural communities while offering additional opportunities;
- Add cultural, social, and recreational opportunities in appropriate places and at a scale that supports community health and well-being;
- Support education, employment, and commercial opportunities that bolster community health and well-being; and,
- Respond and adapt to future social, economic, and environmental challenges.

## CITY CENTERS - NORTH COUNTY



A place to live, work, shop and play • Housing choices for a full range of ages and incomes • Multistory buildings with a mix of shops, offices and services • Easy & safe opportunities supporting walking, biking and riding transit • Well-designed buildings along beautiful streets or surrounding parks and plazas



# North County — Urban Corridors & Centers

Residents of the Thurston Region envision vibrant and walkable city centers in Olympia, Lacey, and Tumwater that serve

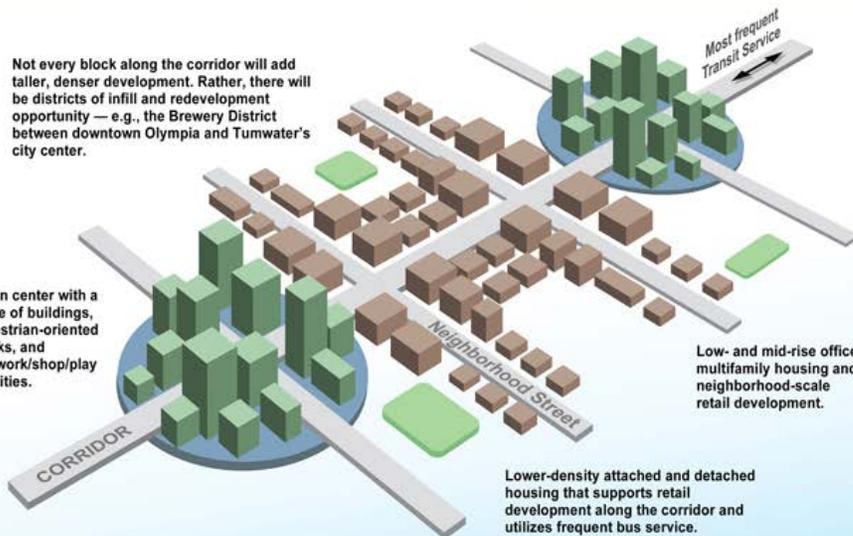
as the community's heart. Along the major transit corridors that connect these centers, residents want activity nodes that encourage

active transportation and serve surrounding neighborhoods with additional housing, jobs, and services.

## URBAN TRANSIT CORRIDORS

Not every block along the corridor will add taller, denser development. Rather, there will be districts of infill and redevelopment opportunity — e.g., the Brewery District between downtown Olympia and Tumwater's city center.

Urban center with a range of buildings, pedestrian-oriented blocks, and live/work/shop/play activities.



Buildings step down from corridor, achieving compatibility between new multistory development and existing smaller-scale neighborhoods.



## Challenges & Opportunities

People in cities throughout the region want vibrant urban centers and corridors — places where people live, work, shop and play. People also envision these areas as the civic heart of cities where folks meet and share ideas. We need these places to attract and support innovators and the jobs their businesses create. Young workers, retirees, and others looking to downsize increasingly seek out these vital centers

in order to live where they can be less car-dependent and find community outside of their door.

The urban core — known regionally as North County — contains areas that are currently — or have the best potential to become — vibrant centers: downtown and West Olympia; Tumwater Town Center and the Brewery District; and Lacey’s Woodland District and planned Gateway Center.

Corridors — the old state highways — provide our major transportation routes, linking the existing centers. Corridors are served by our region’s most frequent transit service, and, in many areas, have the potential to transition from auto-oriented corridors to walkable areas with nodes of activity.

Centers and corridors can be the most challenging places to build because of complex parcel ownership, outdated infrastructure, soil contamination, parking requirements, and the community’s resistance and fear of change. Centers and corridors can also be expensive places to develop or redevelop. Some areas are in need of a face-lift to increase attractiveness, smooth congestion, and resolve other issues to increase their desirability.

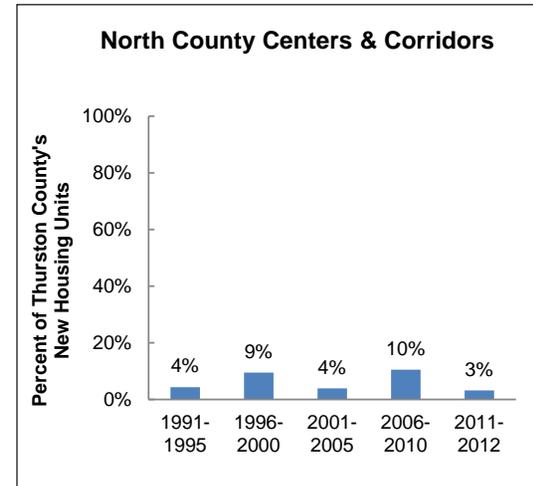
The biggest challenge is attracting enough housing and businesses to these areas that the community has already invested in. Little new commercial or residential development is occurring in the centers and along the corridors. Developers and businesses have tended to locate new projects on larger undeveloped sites toward the periphery of Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater, largely avoiding the centers and urban transit corridors. Since 1995, less than 7 percent of residential units built were located in centers or corridors with excellent transit service.

One final challenge is community resistance — what is often referred to as NIMBYism or “Not In My Back Yard” for any new development in existing centers or neighborhoods. Typically what residents object to is the design of proposed buildings more than the density. In the Thurston Region, we’re beginning to resolve community conflicts through a process called District or Neighborhood Planning. This strategy asks businesses, residents, and other stakeholders to develop a vision, plan, and action plan focused on a specific area. District Planning also identifies the investments and strategies the cities can take to help encourage the type and form of development that the community supports. Although every area is different, one clear trend is emerging: businesses and residents welcome the opportunity to create a vision and have a voice in planning for the future.

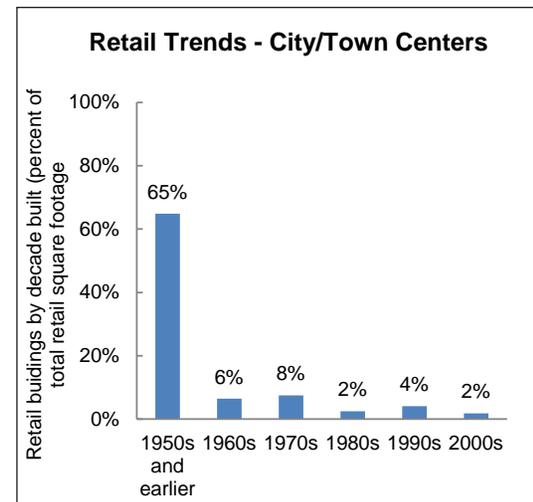
Some specific challenges that are addressed by the actions that conclude this chapter include:

- Community concerns about the design and density of infill and redevelopment and development regulations that do not provide predictability for the development community and residents;
- Aging infrastructure and lack of infrastructure that provides amenities such as sidewalks, street trees, bicycle lanes;
- Too little housing in our centers and corridors to support existing or new business and to support 24-hour activity and the safety that comes with a mix of residents looking out for one another and working with law enforcement;
- Large amounts of surface parking (in parking lots) adjacent to sidewalks discourages walking and saps vitality from the center;
- With fairly low market rents or sale prices for housing in urban areas of our region, the type and form of development the community envisions in centers and along corridors is not financially feasible without some incentives — for example, public financing of street and sidewalk improvements and tax breaks to bridge the gap between costs and revenue;
- Financing for new and unproven types of development can be difficult to obtain as financial institutions do not like to take risk; and,
- A lack of strategic economic development focus aimed at business creation, retention, and expansion in centers and corridors. Over time, this can lead to degraded areas.

*Prior to the 1960s, commercial retail buildings located in city centers. Trends have changed. First, retail growth began to locate in regional shopping centers, and then it moved to “big-box” freeway-oriented shopping areas. Trends appear to be changing again with a movement back to smaller neighborhood-scale businesses. Source: TRPC.*



*Less new housing than envisioned has located in Thurston County's North County centers and corridors — the areas with frequent transit service. Source: TRPC.*



## Sustainability Activities Already Underway

### Building Urban Corridor Communities

The Sustainable Thurston project had been underway for less than a year when the region applied for, and received, a follow-up grant focused on urban corridors and districts. This funding gives the region resources to develop an overall corridor strategy plan and develop three district plans.

**The city of Lacey is focusing on the Woodland District**, one of the region's major employment centers. This District is in the heart of Lacey, adjacent to St. Martin's University, the library, and city hall. Huntamer Park, with music, outdoor movies, and a summer farmers' market, anchors the District. This center includes numerous retail and service opportunities, such as groceries, discount shopping, dialysis centers and other medical services. Recent relocation and consolidation of state agencies to Olympia and Tumwater resulted in many vacant office buildings. The community envisions a mixed-use District with affordable residential, office, retail, services, and parks supported by multimodal streets and pedestrian walkways. The study will identify the tools and actions necessary to achieve the vision.

**The transformation of the Brewery District is Tumwater's focus.** This work expands on Tumwater's 2011 study of the former Olympia Brewery and will promote the commercial and residential revitalization and development of the Brewery District. This District includes the former brewery and the triangle of roads formed by Custer Way, Cleveland Avenue, and Capitol Boulevard. The District extends north to the Sunset Life property and south to E Street. Planning for the area is a priority of Tumwater's Strategic Plan. Part of the oldest portion of Tumwater, the Brewery District is located near the Deschutes River. This area was the original location of the first American settlement on Puget Sound and included a variety of commercial businesses and operations that took advantage of the river's power. Construction of Interstate 5, however, displaced this historic settlement, particularly the commercial portion. The highway destroyed the historic downtown, and commercial businesses moved east within the neighborhood as well as south of the neighborhood. Closure of the Olympia Brewery in 2003 affected the area further, resulting in a loss of jobs and a huge vacant site in the center of the Brewery District. This study will identify the tools and opportunities needed to revitalize the area into a walkable commercial and residential area in this historic portion of Tumwater.

**In Olympia, the focus is on the Martin Way corridor.** This area (Lilly Road on the east/State and Pacific avenues on the west) is close to Providence St. Peter Hospital and other regional medical facilities, a large open space and wetland area, and some of the last undeveloped parcels of land along Martin Way. While served by frequent transit service, the District does not have a complete sidewalk network, nor much density, despite its proximity to downtown Olympia. The results of this study will define the infrastructure investments, such as sidewalks, street frontage, and a stormwater system, to support the future development of the District.

The goals and actions that follow at the end of this chapter are designed to remove regulatory, financial, and perception barriers that stand in the way of adding vibrancy to these urban centers and the major transit corridors that connect them.

**Goal C-1: Create vibrant city centers and activity nodes along transit corridors that support active transportation and housing, jobs, and services.**

**Sustainability Outcomes**

Vital centers and corridors are a major attractor for businesses and workers looking for places to live and work. Such areas also attract a growing population of young workers and seniors seeking to live in active places where they can find community outside their door — and do it without a car trip. Each successful project in a center adds vitality and helps pave the way for additional investments that result in the necessary mix of residential and commercial opportunities that people want.

Adding growth amid centers and the major transit corridors that connect them will reduce growth pressures on rural, resource, and natural areas. This will help protect forest cover and prairie habitat, as well as maintain stream and Puget Sound water quality.

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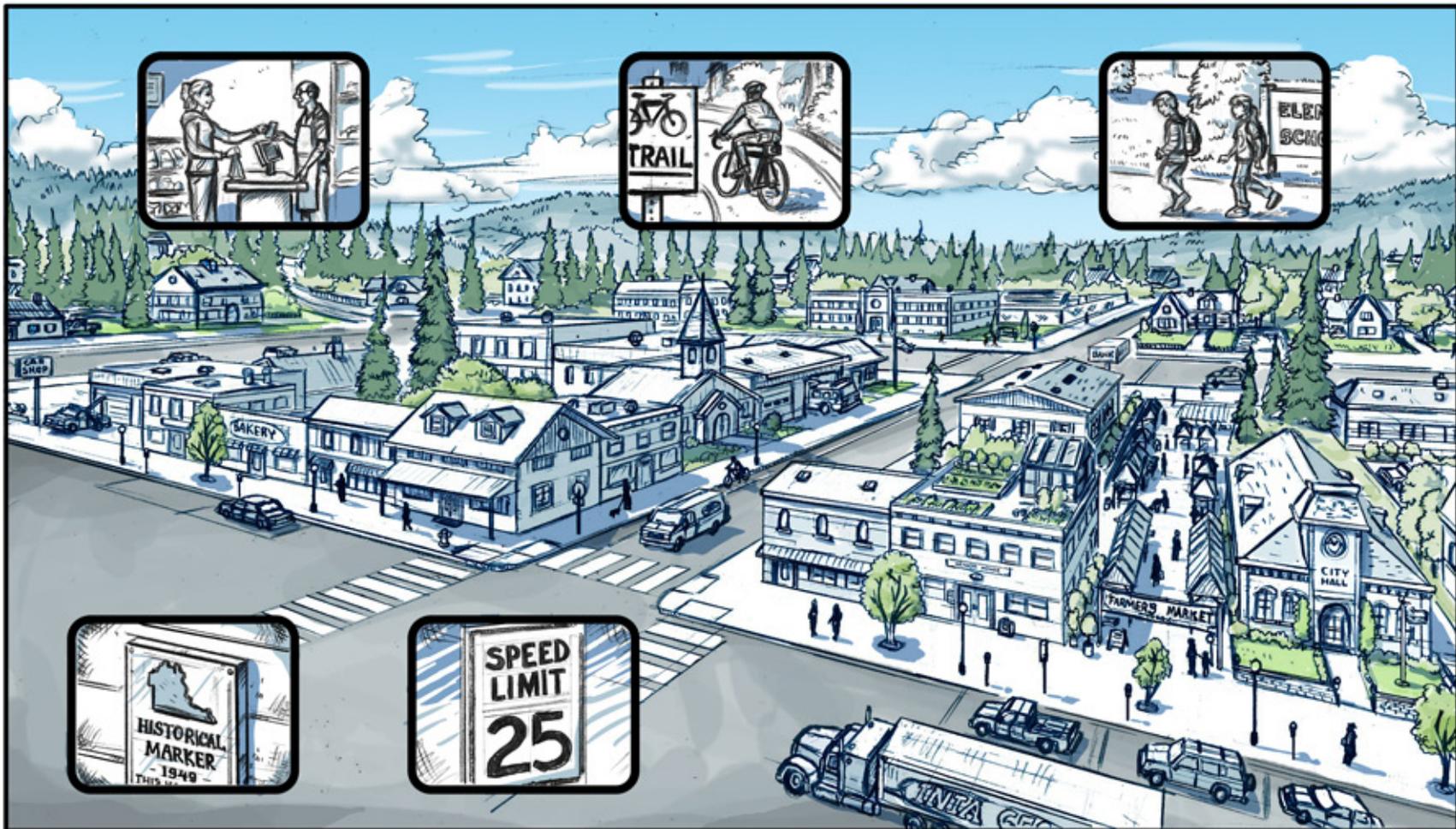
*"Development along corridors and near centers will enable Intercity Transit to serve the community with high quality service and help move our transportation system closer to sustainability. This development approach achieves many sustainability goals such as reduction of transportation greenhouse gas emissions and reducing the need for households to spend limited resources on transportation costs."*

-Intercity Transit

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Focused urban areas are more efficient to serve with essential infrastructure, such as stormwater utilities that help protect water quality. Adding density where infrastructure already exists avoids huge costs to build new systems in undeveloped areas and costly future maintenance. Urban residents tend to use less energy — for transportation and other residential uses — which is important for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, urban residents use less water than suburban and rural residents — mainly as a result of smaller lot sizes. Air quality concerns tend to be higher for some urban residents living close to highways and other high-traffic areas — so attention must be paid to both emission and air filtration systems.

## CITY/TOWN CENTERS - SOUTH COUNTY



A healthy mix of homes, shops and services • Safe sidewalks and street crossings • Housing choices for all ages and incomes • Slower vehicle speeds • New buildings that blend with historic structures • Local residents who support shops • Green buildings that conserve energy and water • Centrally located schools



## South County — City/Town Centers

Residents in southern Thurston County — an area known regionally as the South County — want small cities, towns, and rural communities that provide a range of goods and services, housing options, and jobs. People also want vibrant business districts at the center of these communities to foster entrepreneurship and reflect a unique sense of place, civic pride, and small-town atmosphere.

### Challenges & Opportunities

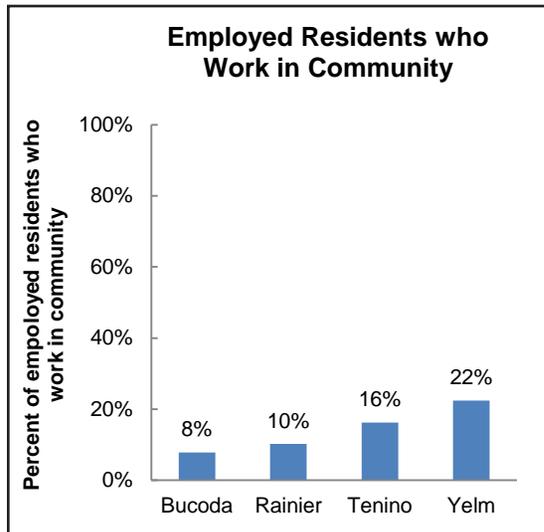
Yelm — one of the fastest-growing cities in the state — is beginning to realize this vision. During the past two decades, Yelm has emerged as a retail and service hub for southern Pierce and Thurston counties. Yelm's downtown currently offers a wide variety of shops, restaurants, a medical services center, movie theater, farmers' market, and a public library.

The other South County communities — Bucoda, Grand Mound, Rainier, Rochester, and Tenino — have not fared as well. Additional shopping opportunities in south Tumwater, Yelm and Centralia, have sapped the vitality of many of the businesses and downtowns in South County. Gone are Rainier's grocery store and Tenino's hardware store. Residents can still get in a car and shop at a big-box store outside the community with relative ease, but this expenditure weakens the sense of character and the economic vitality of the downtowns of South County.

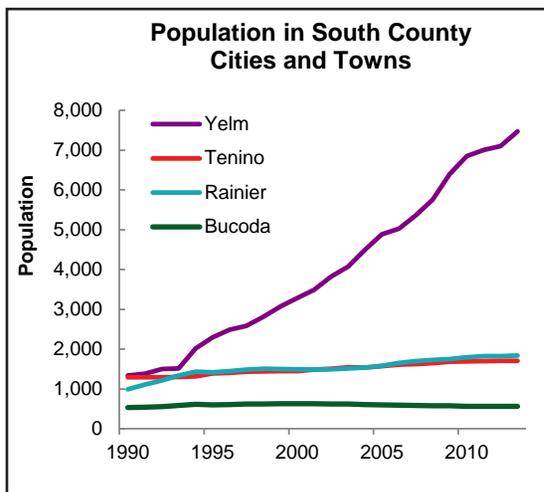
Still, in the face of stiff competition from large retailers to the north and south, small businesses, such as Tenino's Sandstone Cafe and Rainier's Main Street Cookie Company have prospered. Carving out additional entrepreneurial niches — including tourism — will help to boost the vibrancy of South County communities.

Investment in infrastructure also plays a role. Tenino's new sewer system allows the city to add homes and businesses in the compact form needed to create vitality in the downtown. Since the installation of the sewer, several new restaurants have opened. The Grand Mound area also has a sewer and a draft master plan that envisions more opportunities to live, work, shop and play. Lack of sewer in Rainier and Bucoda will limit their ability to add more businesses and homes near their downtowns. Rochester is not currently identified as a growth area, but the community does have a small business district.

Finally, many South County residents commute elsewhere for work, taking their time, talents, and spending dollars with them. According to survey data, less than 25 percent of the labor force in Bucoda, Rainier, Tenino, and Yelm work in the community where they live. Increasing telework, entrepreneurship, home-based and cottage businesses, workforce training, and manufacturing opportunities will encourage more residents to spend time and money in the South County communities.



Creating economic opportunities in South County cities and towns will encourage more residents to spend time and money closer to home. Source: 2010-2013 Survey Data, TRPC.



The city of Yelm experienced rapid growth starting in the early 1990s after it invested in sewer infrastructure. Source: Washington State Office of Financial Management population estimates.

More people living and working close to the business districts of South County will create more demand for shops and services, which in turn, will bring more people to the downtowns — a cycle that will help to generate the vibrancy desired by South County residents.

### Yelm

While located within the South County, Yelm is much larger than its neighbor cities and towns. Yelm has been one of the fastest-growing communities in Washington during the last 15 years, and it is projected to have the highest rate of growth in Thurston County during the next 20-25 years. Much of the growth — both residential and commercial — will locate in a planned community to the west of the existing downtown. Yelm shares some of the same challenges as the other South County communities — namely a downtown that is on a state highway and a continued need to focus on economic growth — but it is a very unique community. Perhaps Yelm’s greatest challenge is the city’s proximity to Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM). In large part, expansion and consolidation of JBLM resulted in the rapid growth of both Yelm and Lacey and rural areas surrounding the communities. Compact growth in the urban areas means less rural growth that puts pressure on already-congested streets. Less rural growth helps stretch school transportation and emergency services budgets, helps reduce growing pains and leads to future economic stability.

## Sustainability Activities Already Underway

### Growing the South County Economy

The South Thurston Economic Development Initiative (STEDI) is a fledgling effort that seeks to promote community and economic development in the southern portion of Thurston County. The effort was initiated by Bucoda, Rainier, Tenino, Yelm, Grand Mound and Rochester, in collaboration with agencies, including the Thurston Economic Development Council, Thurston Regional Planning Council, Washington State University Cooperative Extension, and the Olympia-Lacey-Tumwater Visitor & Convention Bureau, as a means to promote additional economic opportunities and quality-of-life enhancements for area residents.

Key initiatives identified through initial meetings include:

- How best to promote tourism in South County;
- How best to have area businesses tap into resources available from business-training and tourism organizations present in the northern portion of the county; and,
- How best to encourage South County businesses to use various types of new media.



*The main drag through downtown Yelm.*

Some specific challenges in the South County cities and towns that are addressed by the actions at the conclusion of this chapter include:

- Many residents commute elsewhere for work, taking their time, talents, and spending dollars along;
- A significant amount of purchases by South County residents occur in Yelm, Centralia, and the North County. These purchases draw business away from Rainier, Tenino, and Bucoda, and result in sales tax benefits going to other jurisdictions;
- Tourism holds promise, but even that approach has challenges. A limited number of activities and insufficient resources for marketing constrain the number of visitors;
- Pedestrians find the downtowns in many of the communities to be uncomfortable, even though the areas were originally designed for travel on foot. Highways run through most of the South County downtowns. These roadways — in tandem with narrow sidewalks — tend to create an unpleasant atmosphere for people walking. A highway by-pass road and full street improvements in Yelm demonstrate the value of having a vision and taking action toward it a priority;
- Lack of infrastructure limits new business growth and development, especially in areas such as Bucoda, Rainier and Rochester that do not have sewer systems. In these downtowns, new businesses must meet septic drain field requirements, which can be particularly burdensome for uses such as restaurants and areas with very small lot sizes (such as those in the business districts); and,
- South County residents drive many more miles than their northern counterparts and so are more vulnerable to the impacts of fuel price increases on their household budget.

**Goal C-2: Create safe and vibrant South County city and town centers that foster entrepreneurship, active transportation, civic pride, and a sense of place.**

**Sustainability Outcomes**

Adding businesses in the South County centers will enable residents to purchase more goods locally — supporting additional jobs in the community and enhancing local sales tax revenues.

Improving key areas for pedestrian travel will encourage more walking within the communities — enhancing health and decreasing chronic disease and the associated costs to households and health service providers.

Creating vibrant communities within the South County will encourage additional development within the areas and help take pressure off the development of agriculture and rural land.



*Downtown Tenino gets into the holiday spirit.*

## NEIGHBORHOODS



Small shops patronized by nearby residents • Connected streets • Sidewalks • Bike lanes • Well-designed multifamily housing • Pocket parks • Street-level activity • Opportunities for neighborhood interaction



# Neighborhoods

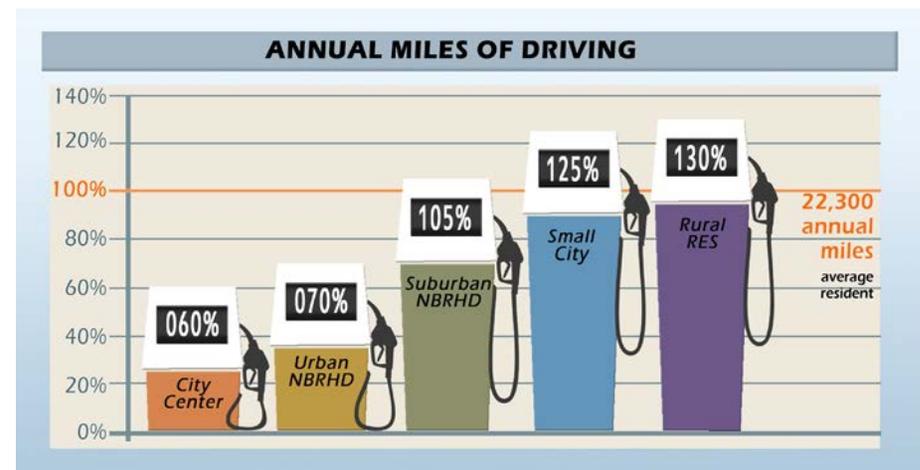
Residents of the Thurston Region envision safe neighborhoods that provide a sense of community. Beyond these basics, people want more destinations close to home — more parks, coffee shops, and other places to gather with neighbors and more options to get around safely without making a car trip.

## Challenges & Opportunities

Most people in the region live in urban or suburban neighborhoods, in single-family homes or garden-style apartments. While we may love these places, we could make improvements that support our lifestyles in a more sustainable way. It's a balance between privacy, backyards, transit access, affordability, neighborhood activity, and walkability. Ideally, our urban neighborhoods would have it all. A unique identity. Places to grow our own food and generate our own energy. Local businesses and great schools within walking distance. Social places to gather or recreate. Jobs close by or opportunities to start a business at home. Travel options to meet our daily needs.

The key is choices. People want a full range of choices so they can live where it suits them best as they move through life stages. Singles have different needs and desires than families. As we age, we may want to downsize — not just homes, but also yards and maintenance.

The challenge: We can't have it all. Most people don't envision driving long distances to work and sitting in traffic — or spending an ever-increasing portion of their paycheck at the gas pump. Yet many people are forced into this situation by the way we design our cities. This Plan presents a few solutions. Bring some jobs, services, and activity closer to existing neighborhoods, and create more opportunities for housing near existing jobs and services — ensuring that we retain the things we love about our neighborhoods.



How much of your paycheck goes to the gas pump? People who live in urban neighborhoods and city centers tend to drive 60 to 70 percent of the miles driven by the average Thurston County resident. Source: Center of Neighborhood Technology via TRPC.

Some specific challenges that have been identified include:

- The majority of neighborhoods in the Thurston Region are built with a single type of use — such as single-family homes — and are too far from any commercial services and parks to encourage walking, biking, or using transit;
  - Adding different types of uses and activities may change existing neighborhoods. Additional housing and shopping choices close by will be welcomed by some — not so much by others;
  - Land-use regulations that result in less diverse types of housing (e.g., single-family homes only) and do not allow neighborhood-scale commercial or appropriately scaled multifamily buildings result in “drive mostly” neighborhoods — offering few choices for reducing car dependence, since they have neither the density nor the destinations needed to support transit, walking, and biking;
  - Where businesses are wanted, there will need to be enough housing close by to support them. A small neighborhood commercial area of 15,000 square feet typically requires 500 units within a quarter-mile, and 1,000 units within a half-mile<sup>6</sup> — nowhere near the typical density of neighborhoods in the Thurston Region;
  - Even minimal bus service requires a certain number of housing units within walking distance of a route. Quality service requires a high density of residential and commercial services in close proximity to be effective;
  - Taking action to use land more efficiently is important. There is a 12-year supply of housing already planned, but these may build out at a density that won't support urban form and the activity necessary to achieve the Sustainable Thurston Vision.
- Parts of the remaining undeveloped growth area are heavily encumbered by environmental constraints, such as wetlands, are costly to serve with infrastructure and may not be the best places for urban growth;
  - Many existing urban neighborhoods lack urban infrastructure such as sewer. Cities are hesitant to annex these areas and assume the financial burden of upgrading infrastructure. Yet many septic systems are failing due to age — a cause of concern for water quality, and in some urban areas development is still allowed on septics;
  - Portions of the urban areas have transportation infrastructure that is not updated to current standards. Of particular note are the dead-end streets that force residents to travel circuitous routes to reach their destinations, discourage walking and bicycling, and limit emergency service access;
  - Many residents of suburban neighborhoods do not have convenient access to healthy food; and,
  - Ways for jurisdictions and neighborhoods to collaborate on smaller improvements are not well established. Areas where nearby neighbors recognize an enhancement is possible — such as a park, a garden, or sitting space — typically go unrealized by jurisdictions because they are unaware of the idea or unable to devote resources to the project.

The goal below and associated actions at this end of the chapter will help the region achieve its community priorities and broader sustainable development vision.

**Goal C-3: Create safe and vibrant neighborhoods with places that build community and encourage active transportation.**

**Sustainability Outcomes**

Creating good access to services in existing small, medium, and large neighborhood commercial hubs supports business, expands the local tax base, and decreases the number of car trips and distance traveled — saving household dollars.

Compact neighborhoods require less energy and water per household. They will need stormwater systems to capture water runoff, but these can sometimes be incorporated into street and park design. Infill within existing urban neighborhoods will increase the likelihood of providing sewer service to urban residents on septic systems. This will reduce the amount of nitrates entering our groundwater that can threaten our drinking water source.

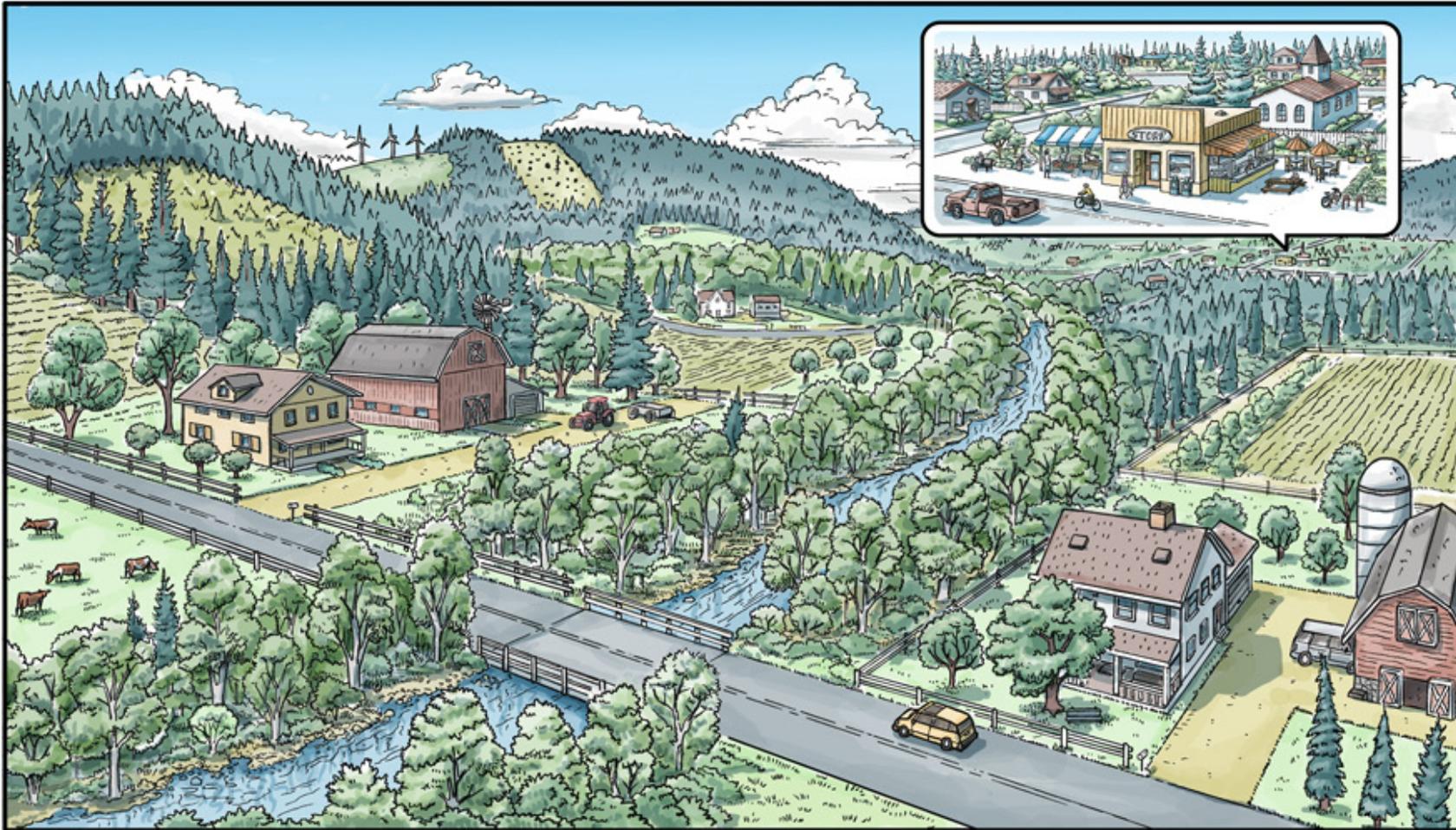


*When there is not enough density to support permanent services, one strategy might be to allow food carts into the neighborhood at certain times or days.*

Opportunity for nearby shopping and services will be determined by the number of households within walking distance or a short drive. Connecting streets encourages more walking and biking as well as increases opportunities for driving fewer miles and reducing traffic on streets. More people living in close proximity to a transit route and traveling to activity centers will determine the amount of service offered. Building housing in a way that uses less land takes pressure off of land not yet built upon in both urban and rural areas.

The most affordable housing will be where households can choose less car ownership and use. Easy and safe walk, bike, and transit access from neighborhoods to service and jobs centers makes living with fewer cars possible.

## RURAL & RESOURCE LANDS



Mix of farms, forests, rural households and small-scale businesses at commercial crossroads •  
Protects region's natural resources • Preserves opportunities for rural living



## Rural & Resource Lands

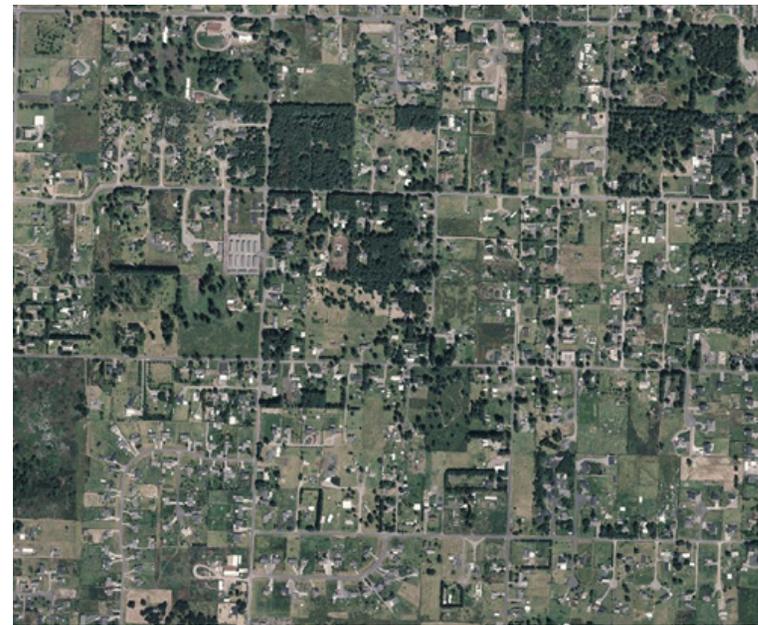
Residents of the Thurston Region envision rural areas remaining bucolic in character, with single-family homes on large lots, farms, forests, and large expanses of natural areas. Rural residents prize the freedom they feel in such areas and envision a high degree of autonomy and self-sufficiency into the future, though they also want some nearby services and job opportunities.



**1992...** Farmlands near Rochester, Wash. in the Chehalis River Valley

### Challenges & Opportunities

Rural and resource lands across the country are vulnerable to residential sprawl. Locally, we've seen our agricultural and forest lands become housing subdivisions. Rural residents want to ensure that their land and investments maintain their value. Those on the urban fringe often find that selling to developers yields more profit than maintaining a resource-based business.



**2012...** Small residential rural subdivisions dot the landscape 20 years later

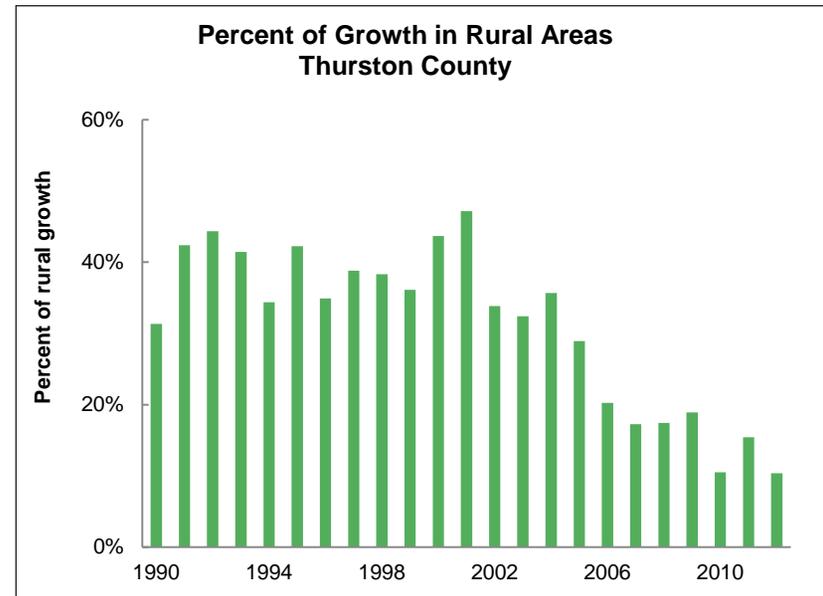
Maintaining the value of rural properties may face greater challenges in the future. Across the country, a growing number of people are choosing to live in walkable urban neighborhoods rather than suburban or rural areas far from activities. If that trend prevails here, overbuilding rural residences may mean existing rural homes will lose their value.

The key is balance. Allow for some rural growth, especially that which is needed to support rural activities such as farming, or family member units to ensure that aging rural residents have family nearby. At the same time, do not encourage rural sprawl. People living in rural homes will then have the flexibility to move when they are ready, opening up opportunities for others who desire a rural lifestyle.

Residents see economic resilience as a strong part of this vision, expressing a desire for rural self-sufficiency. Reinvesting in our resource-based economy and providing incentives such as tax breaks to keep land in rural resource uses will help preserve rural lands.

Rural area challenges for local governments include:

- Per person, it is more costly to provide services and maintain infrastructure in rural areas than those in urban areas. Because these homes are spread out, it takes longer for emergency services to reach them, and there are more miles of road to maintain;
- Rural residents face high travel costs. Such people generally spend more time and travel more miles for their daily commutes or to conduct their errands, since the job centers and stores are in the urban areas. This means more money is spent at the gas pump — money that leaves our region and won't be available to recirculate within our communities;
- Between 1950 and 2008, Thurston County lost 90,000 acres of farmland — 50 percent of its agricultural lands — to residential development, changing rural character and depleting future opportunities to strengthen local food systems<sup>7</sup>;



Rural growth (new permits minus demolitions) dropped steadily during the last decade. However, even at a more modest growth rate than previous decades, rural residential growth strains Thurston County's emergency services, needs infrastructure that is costly to maintain, and puts forest land, farmlands, and critical habitats at risk of urbanization. Source: Thurston Regional Planning Council.

- Recent proposals to list prairie species as threatened and endangered under the Endangered Species Act require habitat conservation and management plans that will affect rural, resource, and likely some urban lands;
- Most rural homes use onsite septic systems, which increasingly have been found to leak and threaten water quality; and,
- Most rural homes are on exempt wells. These wells do not require a water right and are therefore easy to drill, but over time, many small wells can have a large impact on the groundwater. Allowing more exempt wells in a rural area may lower the water table, leaving existing residents with dry wells. Conservation is difficult to encourage with exempt wells, as they are unmetered, so the owners have no cost incentive to conserve.

Some specific challenges related to the rural areas include:

- Understanding how much agricultural land is necessary to maintain local food systems, forest cover is necessary to maintain water quality, and habitat is necessary to protect endangered or threatened species;
- Increasing the economic viability of farming to keep farmers on local farms and preserve farmland; and,
- Protecting critical habitats while maintaining property rights.

The goal and actions at the end of the chapter will help address the challenges listed above.

**Goal C-4: Protect the region's farms, forests, prairies, and open spaces while providing places for those choosing a rural lifestyle.**

### Sustainability Outcomes

Preserving rural, natural, and resource lands is a key element of environmental protection and sustainability. Forest lands store carbon dioxide and help mitigate global climate change. When stream basins have more than 65 percent forest cover, the streams generally function well. Well-managed agricultural lands have less of an impact on the environment than urban lands. Removing growth pressures on prairie lands and other natural lands maintains critical habitats until they can be protected by long-term strategies.

Maintaining rural character would ensure that a rural lifestyle remains available for those who choose it. Shifting new households and jobs as much as possible from rural areas to cities, towns, and identified community growth areas would preserve rural character and aid in creating the envisioned centers, corridors and neighborhoods. Providing a few day-to-day services at existing commercial crossroad areas can enhance a rural community hub for surrounding residents. Large numbers of rural residents travel to cities to work each day.

More opportunities to telecommute, carpool, or vanpool will reduce miles traveled.

Rural lifestyle choices would continue to be available for those who choose them, even if most new housing is located in cities and towns.

Increased traffic on rural roads, car dependence and use, and increased cost of emergency services to rural areas erodes rural quality of life and increases costs to the region as a whole. New rural housing increases pressure on land currently used to preserve farm, forest, and other resource lands.

Preserving farmland would support local, sustainable production of plant and animal products. Healthy food choices will be encouraged by making fresh food available at existing small crossroad service centers, as well as at urban markets.

## Agritourism Comes to Thurston County

Thurston County adopted the Agritourism Overlay District (AOD) Ordinance in 2012, giving South County farmers a much-needed boost. The ordinance is the result of the collaborative work among local farms, wineries, the Olympia Lacey Tumwater Visitor and Convention Bureau, Thurston Regional Planning Council, and other business owners to help farmers make a living all year round.

The term “agritourism” generally refers to any activity that attracts visitors to a farm or ranch. Agritourists can choose from a wide range of activities that include picking fruits and vegetables, riding horses, tasting honey, learning about wine- and cheese-making, engaging in ecotourism or shopping in farm gift shops and farm stands for local hand-crafted goods. Farmers, ranchers, distillers and food artisans are showing an increased interest in starting agritourism ventures as a way to boost the local economy by purchasing locally produced items.

The ordinance is designed to reduce regulatory barriers, streamline permitting, and help guide and encourage future development of agritourism operations within the overlay district. The ordinance covers activities including farmers’ markets, overnight farm stays, farm stores and bakeries, country inns, wineries, breweries and more.

Fred Colvin, a local farmer and former Agriculture Committee member, sees the benefits of agritourism. “Agritourism is just another way for the (agriculture) community to connect with others in the community as well as provide for diversification to help make agriculture more viable,” he said. “The county’s efforts should open up new opportunities for the farming community, and I thank the county for leadership on this.”

The ordinance encompasses about 40 percent of the non-forestry-zoned acreage in Thurston County, primarily in the south. Because it’s the first time something like this has ever been done in region, the Thurston County Board of Commissioners will revisit the ordinance to determine if adjustments to boundaries or other components are needed. To learn more about agritourism in Thurston County, visit [www.co.thurston.wa.us/permitting/agriculture/agriculture-tourism.html](http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/permitting/agriculture/agriculture-tourism.html).

The following table includes Community goals and actions, as well as the timeline, lead, and partners for each action. Timeline definitions are as follows: Underway, Short (1-3 yrs); Medium (3-10 yrs); Long (10-20 yrs). See Appendix for lead and partner acronyms and explanations.

COMMUNITY				
Goals and Actions		Timeline	Lead	Partners
GOAL C-1	North County — Urban Corridors & Centers: Create vibrant city centers and activity nodes along transit corridors that support active transportation and housing, jobs, and services.			
Action C-1.1	Conduct District and Neighborhood area planning. Involve the neighborhood in the process, answer questions up front, and encourage sharing of ideas and information with the goal of creating clarity and predictability about outcomes. Processes include discussions about: density and design; and using form-based codes or other tools that may streamline the permit process by creating more certainty about outcomes that may reduce opposition and costly delays. Identify specific action steps needed to achieve resulting District or Neighborhood vision.	Underway	North County cities	County; IT; EDC; TRPC; Chambers
Action C-1.2	Invest public money to attract private investment in development projects. Create an investment strategy for critical infrastructure and place-making amenities (e.g., street trees, sidewalks, bike lanes, and traffic-calming devices.)	Short; Medium	North County cities; County	IT; LOTT; Finance
Action C-1.3	Pursue grants and loans for mixed-income or subsidized housing, and other types of desired investments.	Short	County; Olympia; Housing Authority	Nonprofits
Action C-1.4	Encourage efficient use of land and building form that encourages walkability. Steps include: enforcing maximum parking requirements or eliminating minimum parking requirements altogether to reduce large expanses of surface parking. Consider strategies such as shared parking, charging for parking, and other means to reduce the need for large amounts of land used for parking.	Short	North County cities	County; IT

# COMMUNITY

Goals and Actions	Timeline	Lead	Partners
<p><b>Action C-1.5</b></p> <p>Utilize incentives to improve financial viability for infill and redevelopment projects. This includes: Special Valuation Multi-family tax program, reducing or eliminating impact fees, using Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) or Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs that have been tested for feasibility, waiving stormwater fees for a number of years, providing frontage and utility improvements, eliminating connection charges, etc.</p>	Short; Medium	North County cities	County; TRPC
<p><b>Action C-1.6</b></p> <p>Work with private financial institutions to provide innovative financing tools to supply credit for center or corridor projects. This includes: creating a community lending pool to supply credit for projects (e.g., spreading the financial risk among several local banks or investors); and other tools and programs that will help the financial viability of projects.</p>	Medium	North County cities	Finance
<p><b>Action C-1.7</b></p> <p>Form partnerships and do market analyses to identify priority opportunities for center and corridor development. Create conditions that attract investments in center projects. This includes: building infrastructure as part of a project to make it financially viable; working with state and local governments to maintain and build their offices in urban centers; and, forge a regional agreement to support center-focused development.</p>	Short; Medium; Long	North County cities	County; IT; TRPC; EDC; Chambers
<p><b>Action C-1.8</b></p> <p>Where appropriate, hire an ombudsman to market center development sites or master-planned areas. Resolve issues during the development process in a way that meets city expectations and development financial and timeline constraints.</p>	Short	North County cities	EDC; Chambers
<p><b>Action C-1.9</b></p> <p>Review and update as appropriate individual jurisdictions' architectural and design guidelines and ensure design review procedures and boards are capable of effectively considering unique needs of urban and mixed-use projects. Consider contracting with an urban architect specifically to support center and corridor development by identifying ways to meet cities' design expectations.</p>	Short	North County cities	Developers

# COMMUNITY

Goals and Actions	Timeline	Lead	Partners
<p><b>Action C-1.10</b></p> <p>Create public-private or public-public land swap strategies to reduce the cost and risk of investments in centers and corridors.</p> <p>This includes considering swapping public lands that are underused and that could be developed more strategically by another government agency or private interest. This also includes amassing parcels in strategic locations and reselling them to a private development partner, or participating in a public-private development opportunity within the bounds of existing law.</p>	Short	North County cities; County	IT; State; School districts
<p><b>Action C-1.11</b></p> <p>Form a multiagency partnership to foster conditions that attract investments in center and corridor projects.</p> <p>This entails collaborating among center and corridor communities, identifying opportunities, and recruiting developers.</p>	Short	North County cities	County; IT; TRPC; EDC; Chambers; Developers
<p><b>Action C-1.12</b></p> <p>Where appropriate pursue a legislative agenda to improve financial feasibility of infill projects, and reduce the risk and cost of center and corridor redevelopment.</p> <p>This may entail identifying barriers to innovative development strategies and working toward potential solutions through the legislative process. This may also build on the working relationship with the State Capitol Committee, and others to rectify policies that create unintended regulatory barriers. Form partnerships with statewide organizations to advocate for solutions.</p>	Medium	TRPC; Cities/towns; County	EDC; State
<p><b>Action C-1.13</b></p> <p>Establish a Main Street program or business district in centers where warranted.</p>	Short	Cities/towns	Chambers; EDC

# COMMUNITY

Goals and Actions	Timeline	Lead	Partners	
<b>GOAL C-2</b>	<b>South County — City/Town Centers: Create safe and vibrant South County city and town centers that foster entrepreneurship, active transportation, civic pride, and a sense of place.</b>			
Action C-2.1	Encourage commercial and cultural activity centers in South County communities.	Underway	South County cities/places	Chambers; EDC; TRPC
Action C-2.2	Continue to support coordinated economic and community building activities among South County communities.	Underway	South County cities/places	Chambers; EDC; TRPC
Action C-2.3	Identify opportunities to support existing and prospective entrepreneurs in South County communities. This includes: conducting interviews of existing businesses; identifying resources that may support those businesses; identifying niche markets where entrepreneurs of any scale can be successful; and, tailoring entrepreneurship training currently delivered in Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater to communities in South County.	Underway	South County cities/places	Chambers; EDC; TRPC
Action C-2.4	Support workforce development training in southern Thurston County to promote new industries.	Short	South County cities/places	Chambers; EDC; TRPC; Higher Ed
Action C-2.5	Improve marketing of potential development and business opportunities available in South County. This includes: conducting an inventory of existing developable lands within South County communities, with the details of properties available to inquiring businesses; identifying potential niche or underserved markets; and making potential opportunities and locations for business more easily available.	Short	South County cities/places	EDC; TRPC

# COMMUNITY

Goals and Actions	Timeline	Lead	Partners	
<p>Action C-2.6</p>	<p>Work on developing an infrastructure for tourism in South Thurston County. This includes: identifying a series of activities throughout the area that could be used to market “A Day in South County” and building on the existing strengths of each community; building a series of distinct events that could bring individuals to each community on multiple days of the year; cross-marketing other South County communities as part of events; developing activities in each community that would engage individuals throughout their stay (e.g., an outdoor coffee shop with nearby shopping, an eatery, a bar, and outdoor recreational opportunities); and, creating places for individuals to stay, such as campgrounds, RV Parks, bed-and-breakfasts, and hotels.</p>	Underway	South County cities/places	VCB; Chambers
<p>Action C-2.7</p>	<p>Build on the quality of place within each of the historic community centers. This includes: ensuring the retention of unique historic architecture and design features during the remodel of storefronts, as well as ensuring that new development complements historic development, when appropriate.</p>	Short	South County cities/places	
<p>Action C-2.8</p>	<p>Develop a coordinated State Route 507/U.S. Highway 12 “Main Street” or economic development program for the communities of Rainier, Tenino, Bucoda, and Rochester. This entails identifying whether a joint program for the communities is desired, and then entails taking steps to share resources on the development and implementation of the program.</p>	Short	South County cities/places	TRPC; Chambers
<p>Action C-2.9</p>	<p>Minimize the impact of highways on each of the historic South County community centers. This entails working with the Washington State Department of Transportation to minimize the impacts of State Route 507 and U.S. Highway 12 on the downtowns of South County communities. Consider strategies to reduce the impacts of high traffic volumes, speeds, and truck traffic on business districts that were originally designed for pedestrians.</p>	Short	TRPC	South County cities/places

# COMMUNITY

Goals and Actions	Timeline	Lead	Partners
<p><b>Action C-2.10</b></p> <p>Invest public money to attract private investment in the development of the South County centers.</p> <p>This includes: developing an investment strategy for infrastructure and place-making amenities; identifying infrastructure needed (streets, sidewalks, utilities) and leveraging public resources to attract private investments in desired project types; and, evaluating public amenities lacking in centers (street trees, parks, plazas) and developing an investment strategy to complete these over time or as part of development projects.</p>	Medium	South County cities/places	TRPC; Chambers
<p><b>Action C-2.11</b></p> <p>Coordinate with Thurston County to ensure that rural development that generates pass-through traffic within incorporated communities pays its fair share for necessary road improvements.</p>	Short	South County cities/places	TRPC
<p><b>Action C-2.12</b></p> <p>Develop sewer plans for Rainier and Bucoda and ensure that the potential cost burden on residents is a fundamental consideration in the development of the systems.</p>	Short; Medium	Rainier; Bucoda	
<p><b>Action C-2.13</b></p> <p>Develop and implement new and existing master plans such as the Grand Mound master plan.</p>	Short; Medium	County	Tribes; PSE
<p><b>Action C-2.14</b></p> <p>Promote telework in South County towns and cities to keep workers and their dollars local and reduce vehicle miles traveled.</p>	Underway	TRPC	

# COMMUNITY

Goals and Actions	Timeline	Lead	Partners	
<b>GOAL C-3</b>	<b>Neighborhoods: Create safe and vibrant neighborhoods with places that build community and encourage active transportation.</b>			
Action C-3.1	<p>Conduct neighborhood area planning with the goal of: increasing housing density and diversity; identifying opportunities for small neighborhood commercial centers; and preserving neighborhood character and quality of life.</p> <p>This includes: rezoning neighborhoods to allow for a mix of housing types that include single-family homes and “middle-density” choices such as accessory dwelling units, duplexes, triplex, fourplexes, townhouses, and mansion apartments in appropriate locations.</p>	Short; Medium	Cities/towns	County; IT; EDC; Chambers; TRPC; PSE
Action C-3.2	<p>Work to establish “20-minute neighborhoods” that offer most neighborhood residents an array of basic services within a half mile or 20 minute walk from home.</p> <p>This entails: adjusting zoning and regulations to allow neighborhood-scale commercial development with appropriate amounts of parking.</p>	Short; Medium	Cities/towns	IT
Action C-3.3	<p>Encourage appropriately scaled home-based business and live/work opportunities in neighborhoods.</p> <p>This offers less risk for new business startups that foster entrepreneurs and new businesses. Allow historic buildings to be used for otherwise non-permitted uses to encourage preservation.</p>	Short	Cities/towns	
Action C-3.4	<p>Expand transit routes and increase service frequency where the density, land uses, street design, and location of neighborhoods between main activity center destinations will result in good service usage.</p>	Short; Medium; Long	IT; R/T	Cities/towns
Action C-3.5	<p>Rethink low density residential-only zoning districts in the urban areas where there is still greenfield buildable land.</p> <p>These zoning districts encourage development to occur at densities too low to be serviced by transit, creating large neighborhoods that have very few transportation options, and often are far away from jobs, goods, and services.</p>	Short	Cities/towns; County	TRPC
Action C-3.6	<p>Take a comprehensive look at the vacant land supply in the unincorporated urban growth area, and remove any areas that are not suitable for urban development for environmental reasons such as high groundwater, large amounts of wetlands, location in relation to streams, rivers, and floodplains, or steep slopes.</p>	Medium	Cities/towns; County	TRPC

# COMMUNITY

Goals and Actions	Timeline	Lead	Partners
<p><b>Action C-3.7</b></p> <p>Assess the cost of extending infrastructure to the remainder of the urban growth areas, and consider the full costs of maintenance when determining appropriate areas for urban growth.</p> <p>Place areas of the unincorporated growth area that do not currently have urban infrastructure (sewer or water lines) or where there are no specific plans to extend infrastructure, into longer term holding zones to ensure when development does occur urban infrastructure is available. Consider removing from the growth area undeveloped land that will be too costly to serve with urban infrastructure due to the current land-use pattern, presence of environmentally constrained areas, distance from existing infrastructure, or other factors.</p> <p>Conversely, consider developing infrastructure ahead of time to encourage development in areas of UGA where it is most desirable. Use latecomer agreements, etc. to get reimbursement from developers.</p>	Medium	Cities/towns	County
<p><b>Action C-3.8</b></p> <p>Develop inter-local agreements to resolve annexation issues.</p> <p>Issues between jurisdictions vary, but may include: septic systems, sub-standard development, older, existing housing stock, unincorporated islands, environmental concerns such as high groundwater and possible endangered species listings.</p>	Short	Cities/towns; County	TRPC
<p><b>Action C-3.9</b></p> <p>Identify and build street and path connections within existing neighborhoods and design well-connected streets within any new neighborhoods.</p> <p>This includes identifying funding sources for: connecting neighborhood streets between subdivisions; developing sidewalks where needed; increasing the regional network of bicycle lanes; connecting neighborhood bike/walk networks with schools and regional multiuse pathways; and incorporating traffic calming devices.</p>	Short; Medium; Long	Cities/towns; County	Neighborhoods; IT
<p><b>Action C-3.10</b></p> <p>Increase opportunities for urban agriculture.</p>	Short	Cities/towns	
<p><b>Action C-3.11</b></p> <p>Allow food carts at identified destinations in neighborhoods to offer easy-to-start-up activity in neighborhoods and encourage entrepreneurs. Work with the County Health Department to look at revising regulations to make food carts more viable.</p>	Short	Cities/towns	TCPHSS
<p><b>Action C-3.12</b></p> <p>Offer grants to promote neighborhood innovation and build capacity within neighborhoods.</p>	Short	Cities/towns	

# COMMUNITY

Goals and Actions		Timeline	Lead	Partners
<b>GOAL C-4</b>	<b>Rural &amp; Resource Lands: Protect the region's farms, forests, prairies, and open spaces while providing places for those choosing a rural lifestyle.</b>			
Action C-4.1	Set goals for resource and habitat protection such as no net loss of rural farmlands, forest cover, lands designated for long-term forestry, critical prairie habitats, or impervious surface limits.	Short	County	TRPC; Cities/towns; Land trusts
Action C-4.2	Create a new category of agricultural lands called Locally Designated Farm Lands. Eligibility could be open to lands enrolled in the Open Space Tax Program for Agriculture, located outside an Urban Growth Area (UGA), and not zoned for Long-Term Agriculture or Nisqually Agriculture. See below for how this new category of agricultural lands could be used.	Short; Medium	County	
Action C-4.3	Expand the use of the purchase of development rights (PDR) and transfer of development rights (TDR) programs in Thurston County.  This can be accomplished by identifying priority farmlands (such as Locally Designated Farm Lands), forest lands, prairie and other critical habitats that may be eligible for the program. Fund the PDR program using local conservation futures funds or through a local bond approved by voters. Develop a cooperative management agreement between Thurston County and local land trusts (e.g., Capitol Land Trust and Nisqually Land Trust) to manage the program.	Short; Medium	County	Cities/towns; Land trusts
Action C-4.4	Strengthen and increase conservancy partnerships (e.g. Capitol Land Trust and Nisqually land Trust) to provide long-term acquisition and habitat management options for high value conservation properties in rural Thurston County.	Short	County; Land trusts	
Action C-4.5	Develop habitat conservation and management plans that will help to preserve suitable tracts of prairie habitat in the rural lands and reduce uncertainty for property owners in impacted urban areas and small cities where growth is intended.	Underway	County; Federal	Cities/towns; State; Port
Action C-4.6	Create a habitat methodology to allow impacts to prairie habitat to be quantified to assign proper mitigation.  This methodology can also be used to gauge relative quality of prairie habitat to inform acquisition strategies or conservation easements, and used to establish conservation banking or in-lieu-fee strategies.	Underway	County	Cities/towns; State; Port; School districts

# COMMUNITY

Goals and Actions	Timeline	Lead	Partners
<p>Action C-4.7</p> <p>Consider buying property which would need a reasonable use exception because of high habitat or resource value.</p>	<p>Short; Medium; Long</p>	<p>County; Land trusts</p>	
<p>Action C-4.8</p> <p>Make clear incentives available to reduce tax burden on rural lands.</p>	<p>Short</p>	<p>County</p>	
<p>Action C-4.9</p> <p>Reexamine rural zoning. Apply science-based reasoning to rezoning rural areas that provide habitat for threatened or endangered species or provide value for watershed protection. Ensure rural zoning adequately identifies and protects remaining agricultural lands with long-term value for food production. Designate more viable forestry lands as long-term resource lands to preserve this important aspect of the rural economy for future generations and maintain what remains of the region’s rural character. Reexamine rural 1 per 5 acre zoning designation to ensure that suburban development does not occur in the rural areas and to provide a greater range of rural density. Consider downzone with cluster provisions with the goal of protecting large tracts of forest or agricultural land.</p>	<p>Short</p>	<p>County</p>	
<p>Action C-4.10</p> <p>Request advance notification and consultation from the State of Washington when changing land use, such as when school forest lands are converted to private ownership for development.</p>	<p>Short; Medium</p>	<p>State</p>	<p>Cities/towns; County</p>
<p>Action C-4.11</p> <p>Actively promote agricultural use of land through outreach, encouragement and incentive programs such as agricultural direct Nonprofits, and existing community supported agriculture organizations.</p>	<p>Short; Medium</p>	<p>Nonprofits</p>	<p>WSU</p>