



2021

Buildable Lands Report For Thurston County

Thurston Regional Planning Council
June 2021

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TRPC’s mission is to “Provide Visionary Leadership on Regional Plans, Policies, and Issues.”

To Support this Mission:

- A. Support **regional transportation** planning consistent with state and federal funding requirements.
- B. Address **growth management, environmental quality**, and other topics determined by the Council.
- C. **Assemble** and **analyze data** that support local and regional decision making
- D. Act as a **“convener”**, build regional **consensus** on issues through information and citizen involvement.
- E. Build **intergovernmental consensus** on regional plans, policies, and issues, and advocate local implementation.

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Maya Teeple	Thurston County
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Since 1997, the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) has required the state's fastest growing counties to periodically review and evaluate development trends to ensure consistency with GMA, countywide planning policies, and comprehensive plans (RCW 36.70A.215). This evaluation is known as the "Buildable Lands Report." Thurston Regional Planning Council has issued four reports for Thurston County: in 2002, 2007, 2014, and this report, the 2021 Buildable Lands Report.

Growth Management Act Goals

The Buildable Lands legislation requires counties to answer two key questions regarding GMA's land use goals in their Buildable Lands Reports:

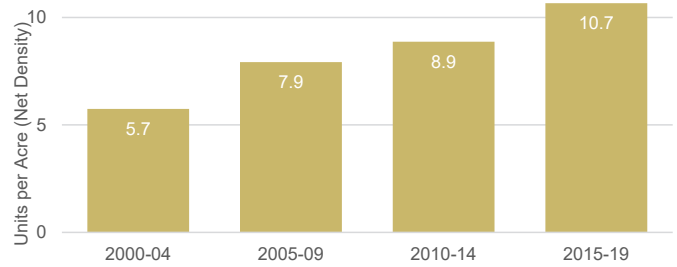
- **Are we achieving urban densities for new development in our urban areas?** The Thurston County Buildable Lands Report also evaluates densities in rural areas.
- **Is there sufficient land in our urban areas for 20 years of growth?** The report includes an evaluation of land supply for both residential and commercial/industrial development.

If the report finds that Thurston County is not meeting these goals, cities and the County are required to identify "reasonable measures" that would bring development trends into alignment with countywide planning policies and comprehensive plans.

Based on the findings of Volume I of this report (GMA Goals), Thurston County's development trends are consistent with GMA's land use goals and reasonable measures are not necessary.

Are we achieving urban densities in our urban areas?

Yes. Achieved densities in urban areas are more than 4 housing units per acre and increasing.



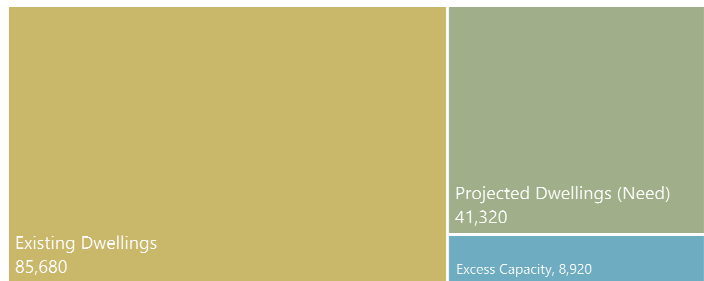
Are we achieving rural densities in our rural areas?

Yes. More rural homes are built on larger lots compared to when GMA was passed.



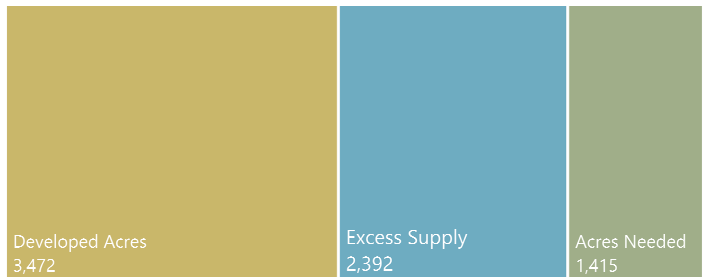
Is there sufficient capacity in our urban areas for 20 years of population growth?

Yes. Capacity — including a reasonable market factor — exceeds supply by 18 percent.



Is there sufficient land in our urban areas for 20 years of commercial/industrial growth?

Yes. There is sufficient vacant and redevelopable land for commercial and industrial development.



Regional Goals

In 2013, Thurston Regional Planning Council adopted *Creating Places — Preserving Spaces: A Sustainable Development Plan for the Thurston Region* (Sustainable Thurston). The plan was the culmination of a two-year effort to envision how the region will “look, function, and feel” in 2035.

Sustainable Thurston included twelve priority goals, two of which address land use and development patterns in urban and rural areas:

- **Create vibrant centers, corridors, and neighborhoods while accommodating growth.**
Target: By 2035, 72 percent of all (new and existing) households in our cities, towns, and unincorporated urban growth areas will be within a half-mile (comparable to a 20-minute walk) of an urban center, corridor, or neighborhood center with access to goods and services to meet some of their daily needs.
- **Preserve environmentally sensitive lands, farmlands, forest lands, prairies, and rural lands and develop compact urban areas.**
Target: Between 2010 and 2035, no more than five percent of new housing will locate in the rural areas, and 95 percent will be within cities, towns, unincorporated urban growth areas, and tribal reservations. Rural areas are defined as outside of the cities, towns, unincorporated urban growth areas, and tribal reservations.

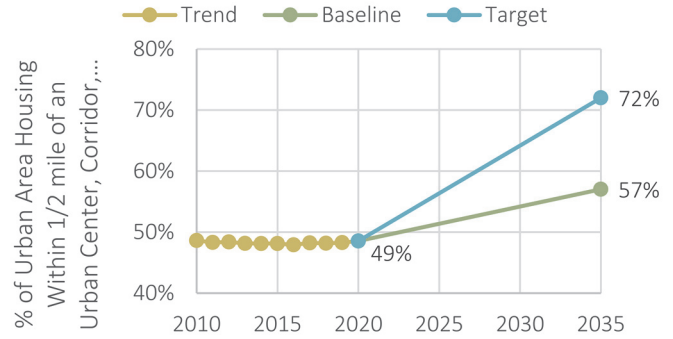
While Sustainable Thurston falls outside of GMA’s planning framework — and failing to meet its goals does not require Thurston County jurisdictions to identify and adopt reasonable measures — our analysis shows that we are not on track to meet two of the land use targets associated with the Sustainable Thurston Priority goals.

Because the region is not on track to meet the more ambitious targets identified in Sustainable Thurston (Volume II), the report includes recommended strategies for the cities and county to include as part of their periodic comprehensive plan updates due in 2025.

Meeting the Sustainable Thurston targets will require changes to expected development patterns in both the urban and rural areas. We will both need to accommodate more growth in urban areas and limit conversion of natural resource lands in rural areas. The recommendations recognize this interdependence and include strategies for both urban and rural areas. The Thurston region will benefit from its long history of collaborative, multijurisdictional planning to achieve this shared vision.

Are we on track to concentrate 72 percent of urban area housing within city centers, corridors, and neighborhoods?

No. The proportion of development in urban centers and corridors is projected to increase substantially over the next fifteen years, but not enough to meet the target under current regulations.



Are we on track to see no more than five percent of new housing locate in rural areas between 2010 and 2035?

No. While the majority of new development will continue to be in urban areas, approximately 13 percent of new housing is projected to locate in rural areas under current trends.

