

Buildable Lands

Thurston County Planning Commission

May 5, 2021



Growth Management Act

Growth Management Act
(1990)

Countywide Planning Policies

County
Comprehensive Plan

City
Comprehensive Plans

County Development
Regulations

City Development
Regulations

Growth Management Act

- 13 goals that cities/counties should plan towards

Buildable Lands Report

- Is development consistent with GMA's Land Use Goals?
- Do we need to change development regulations to meet those goals? ("Reasonable Measures")

Buildable Lands Funding

- Funding provided to Thurston County from the Dept. of Commerce
- TRPC drafting the Buildable Lands Report on contract for Thurston County

Countywide Planning Policies

“Within the overall framework of the OFM population projections for the County, TRPC will develop countywide and smaller area population projections, pursuant to RCW 36.70A.110 and based on current adopted plans, zoning and environmental regulations and buildout trends.” (11.1b)

“TRPC will review the smaller area population projections to assure that the 20-year population is accommodated countywide, and that urban growth areas are of sufficient area and densities to permit the projected urban population.” (11.1d)

Urban and Rural GMA Goals

GMA has different goals for urban and rural areas

Urban Areas (Cities and UGAs)

“Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.”

Rural Areas

“Preserve rural based economies and traditional rural lifestyles”

2021 Buildable Lands Report

I. GMA Goals



1. Achieved Densities

Are we achieving urban-level residential densities in Urban Growth Areas? Rural densities in the rural areas?



2. Capacity

Is there sufficient buildable land in the urban areas to accommodate 20 years of residential and commercial/industrial growth?

II. Regional Goals

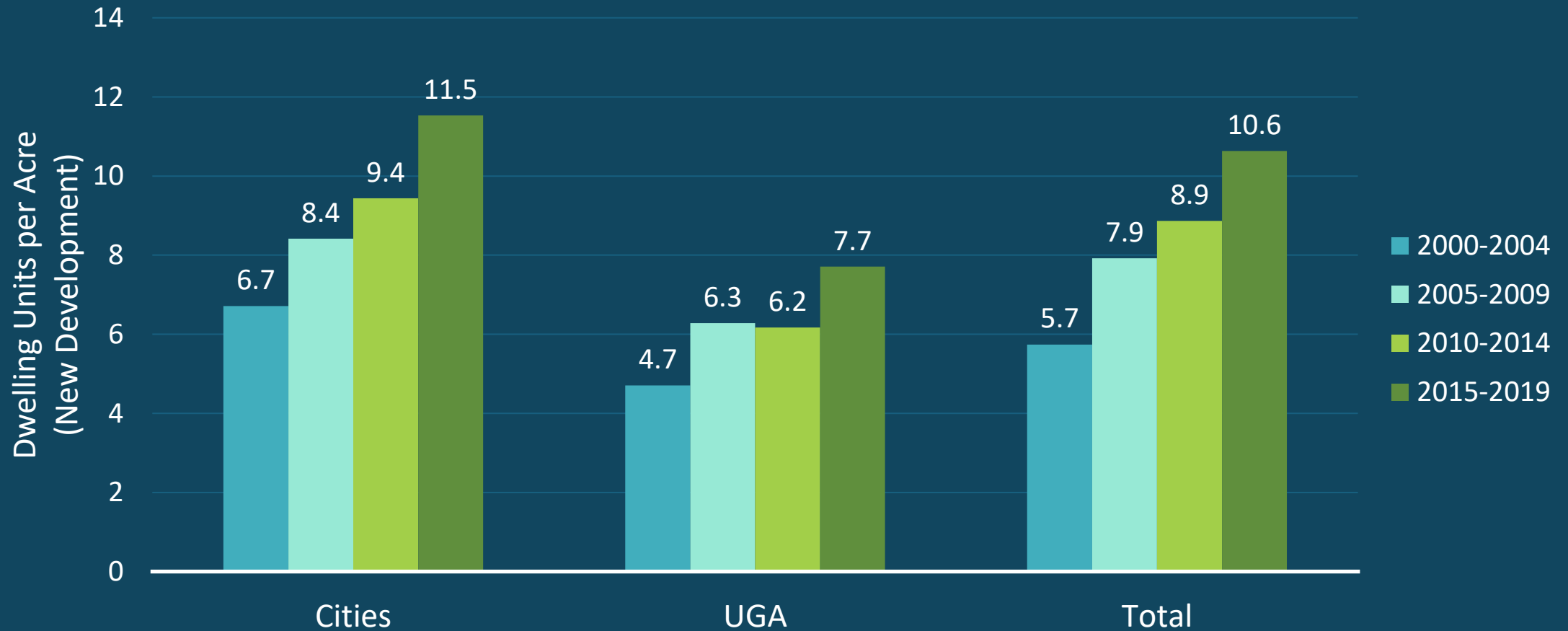


• Sustainable Thurston Targets

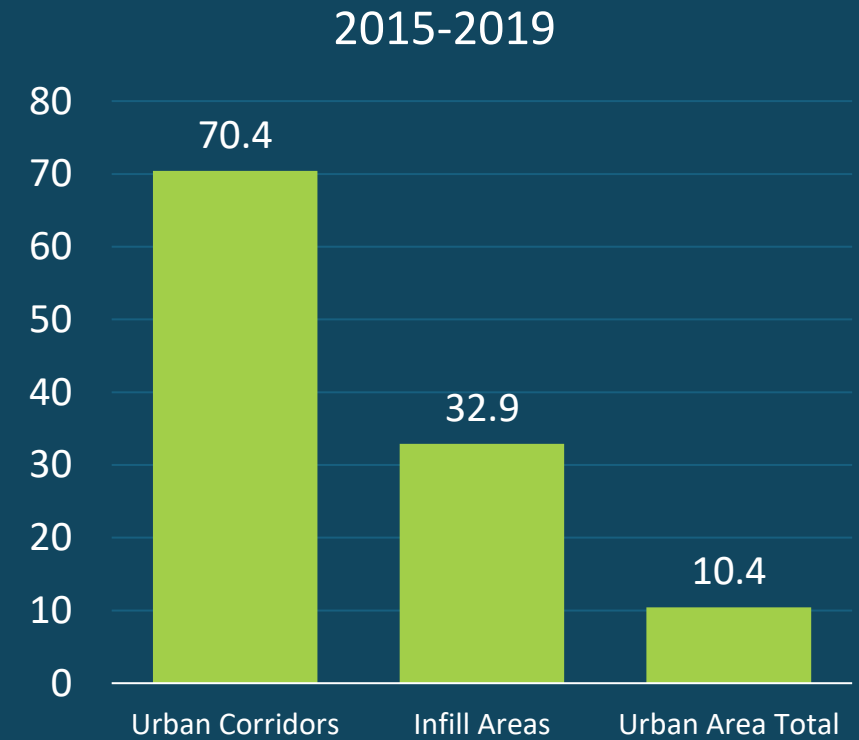
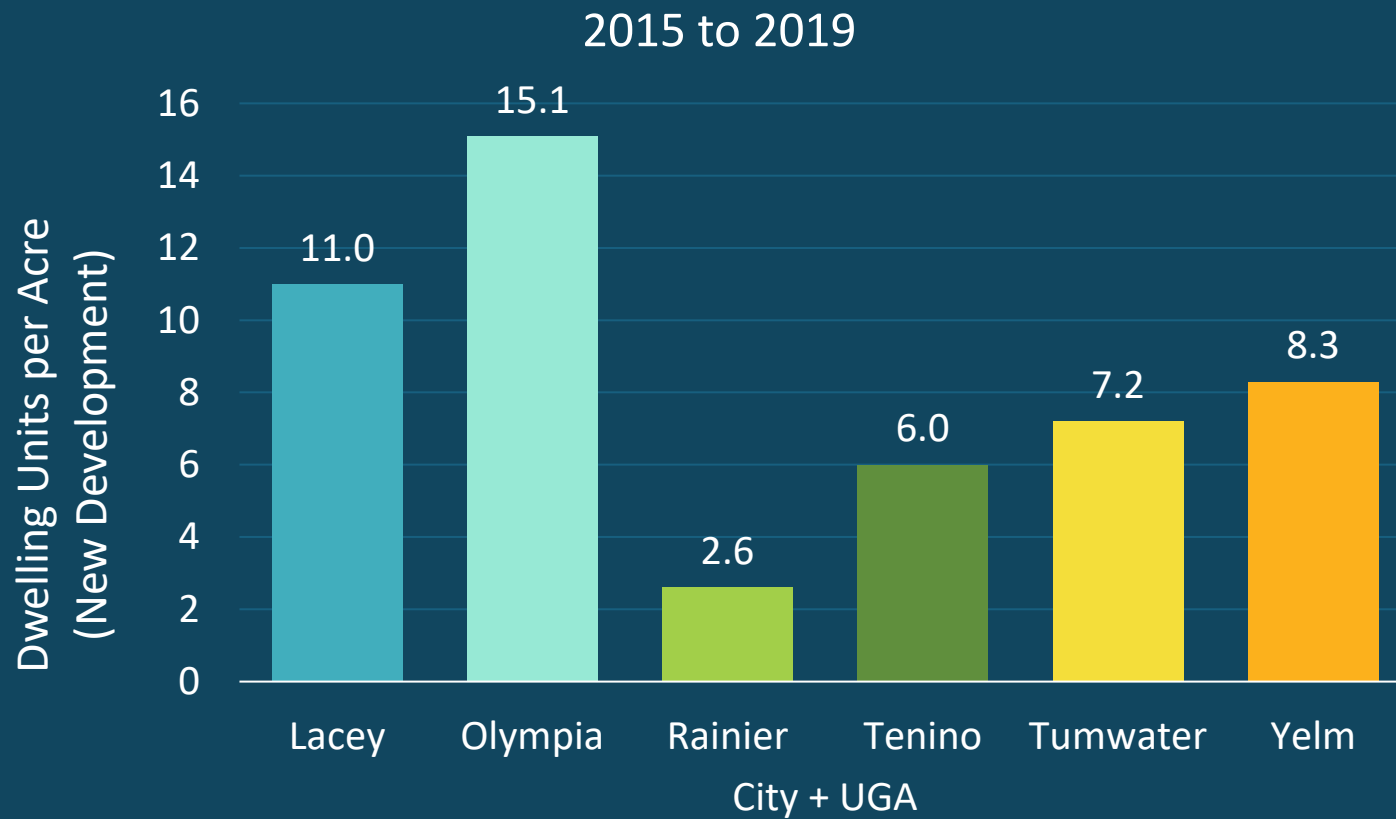
- At least 95% of new housing between 2010 and 2035 in the urban areas
- 72% of urban area housing within ½ mile of an urban center, urban corridor, or neighborhood center

Urban Densities

Are we achieving urban-level residential densities in Urban Growth Areas?

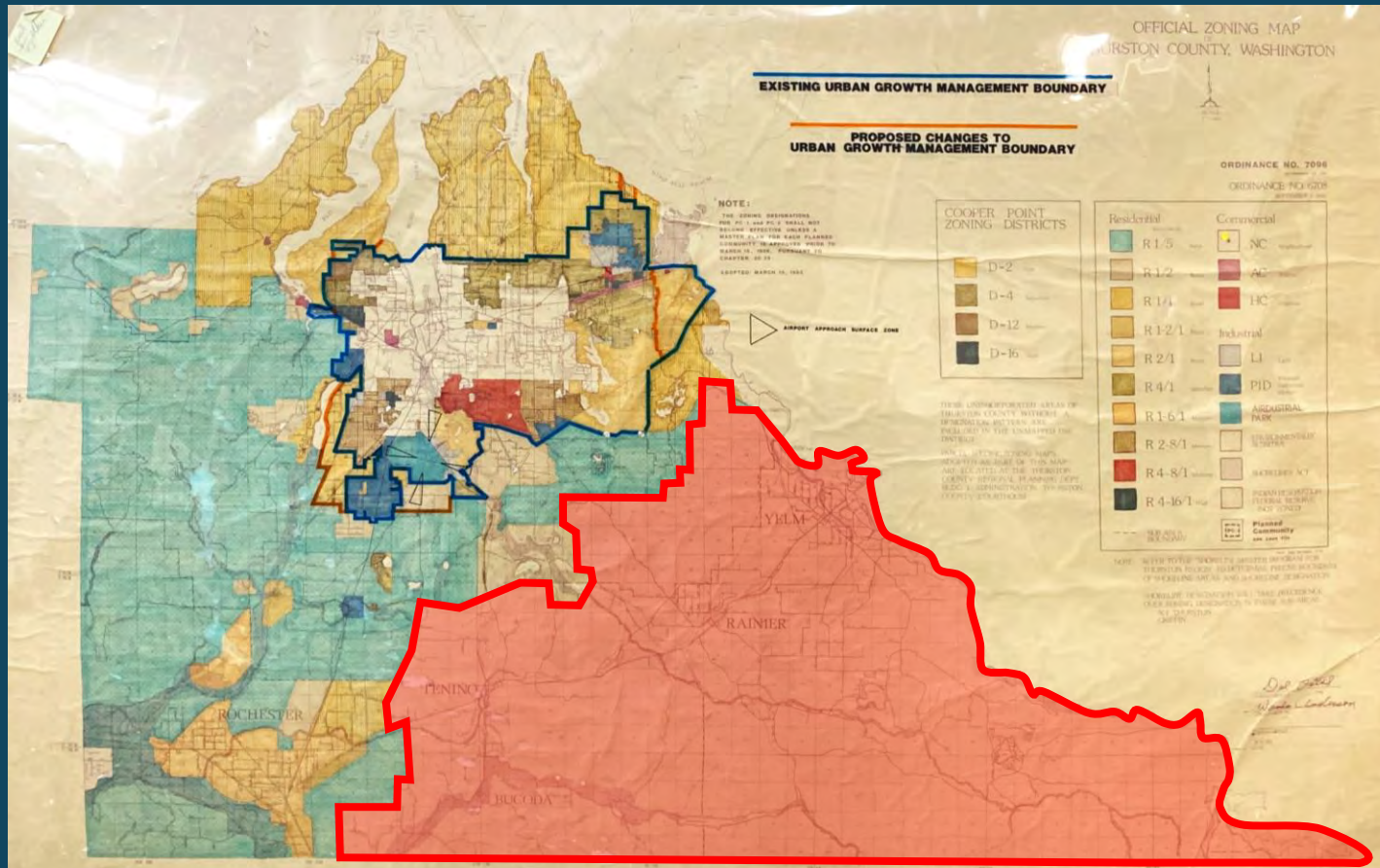


Urban Densities



Rural Densities

How are lot sizes changing in the rural unincorporated County?

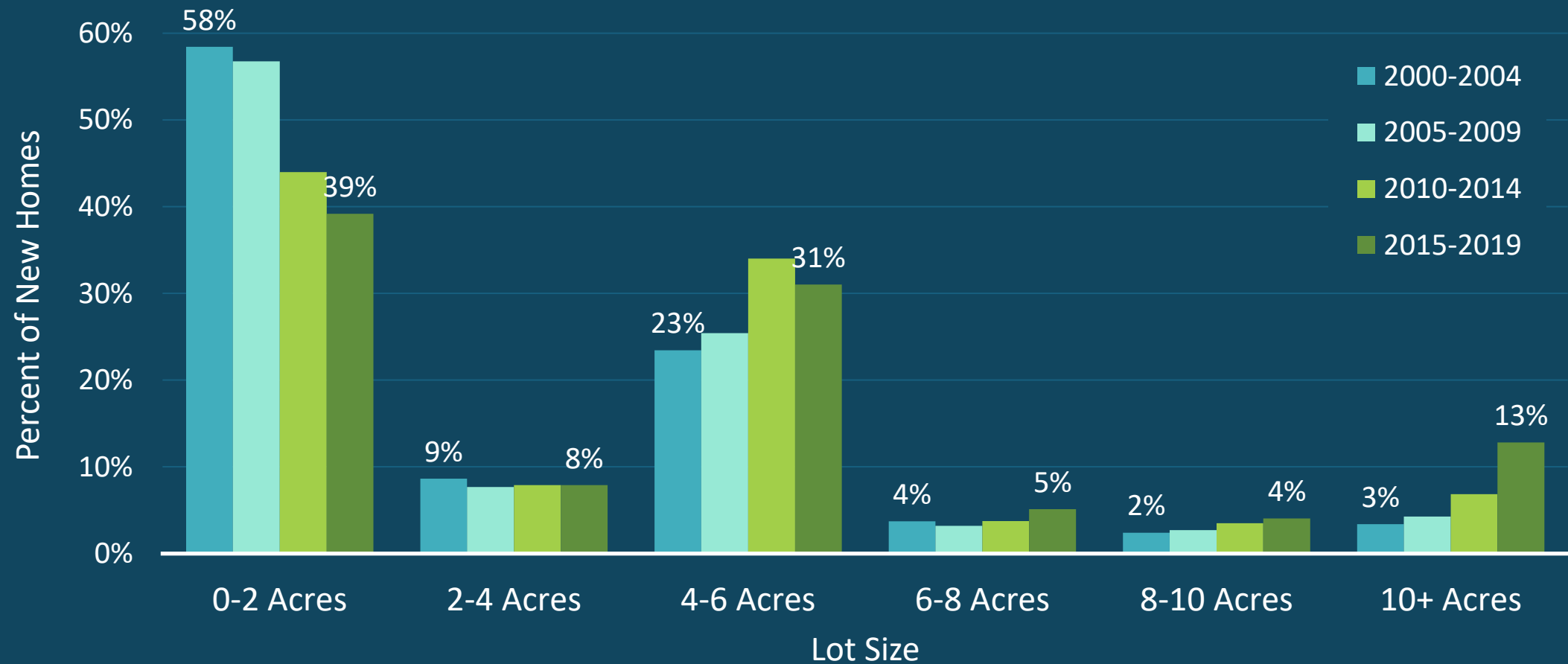


OFFICIAL ZONING MAP
THURSTON COUNTY, WASHINGTON
November 10, 1981

Unmapped Use
District

Rural Densities

How are lot sizes changing in the rural unincorporated County?



Achieved Densities

Are we achieving appropriate residential densities in urban and rural areas?

Findings:

Urban Areas

- We are achieving urban densities in our urban areas (>4 units per acre)
- Housing densities are increasing in urban areas

Rural Areas

- Appropriate densities for rural areas

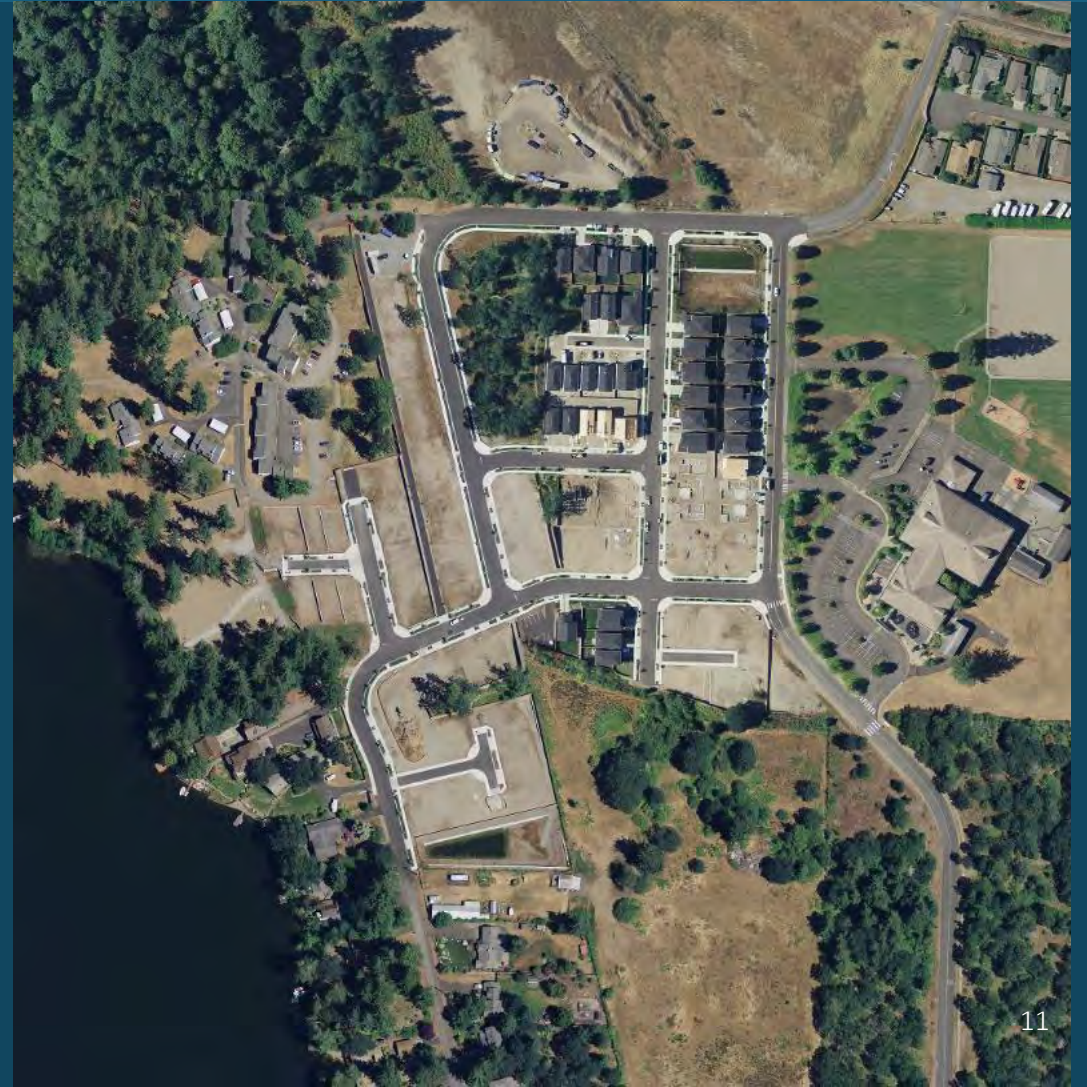
Capacity

What is “capacity”?

- How much land is developable
- How many housing units could be built

How is it calculated?

- Existing use
- Zoning and development regulations
- Environmental constraints



Urban Capacity

Residential

Number of Dwelling Units



Urban Capacity

Commercial / Industrial

Acres of Commercial Land

Developed Land Acres, 2020 2,400	Acres Available 2020-Plus 2,200	
	Acres Needed 2020-2040 1,200	Percent Excess Capacity 45%

Acres of Industrial Land

Developed Land Acres, 2020 1,100	Acres Available 2020-Plus 1,700	
	Acres Needed 2020-40 200	Percent Excess Capacity 88%

Urban Capacity

Is there sufficient buildable land in the urban areas to accommodate 20 years of commercial/industrial development?

Findings:

- There is sufficient capacity for 20 years of housing growth in urban areas
- There is sufficient capacity for 20 years of commercial and industrial growth – but more uncertainty

Elements of the Thurston County Report

GMA Goals

- ✓ **1. Achieved Densities**
Are we achieving urban-level residential densities in Urban Growth Areas?
- ✓ **2. Urban Capacity**
Is there sufficient buildable land in the urban areas to accommodate 20 years of residential and commercial/industrial growth?

Reasonable Measures

“those actions necessary to reduce the differences between growth and development assumptions and targets contained in the countywide planning policies and the county and city comprehensive plans with actual development patterns.”

RCW 36.70A.215

Reasonable measures are not necessary

Challenges & Uncertainties

- **Sewer** — Will a lack of infrastructure limit development and housing densities?
- **Rural/Urban Housing Split** — Will we see a shift in demand from urban to rural areas?
 - Endangered species listings
 - Permit exempt wells
 - COVID-19 / Telework
- **Housing Affordability** — Enough capacity, but will people be able to afford the housing?

Regional Vision: Sustainable Thurston

How should Thurston County “look, function, and feel” in 2035?

North County Centers & Corridors

Dense neighborhoods where people can live, work, and play without depending on a vehicle



Residential Neighborhoods

Areas with a range of housing options centered around neighborhood retail/civic spaces



South County Communities

Foster entrepreneurship and economic development while maintaining “small town feel”



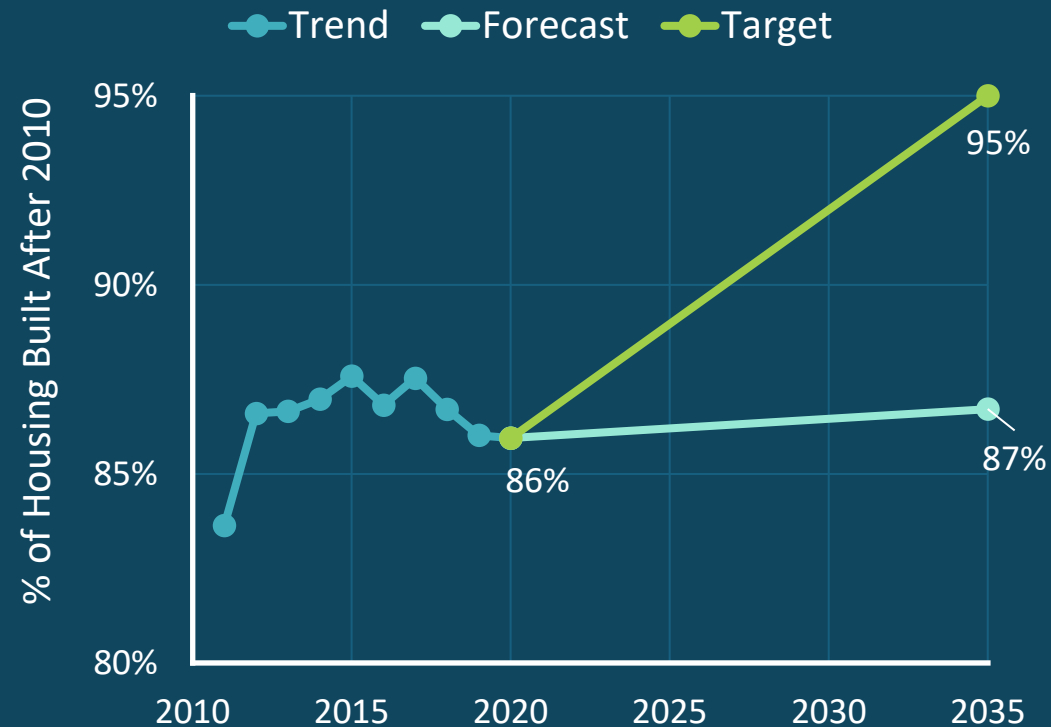
Rural Lands

Preserve rural character and protect critical habitat and resource lands

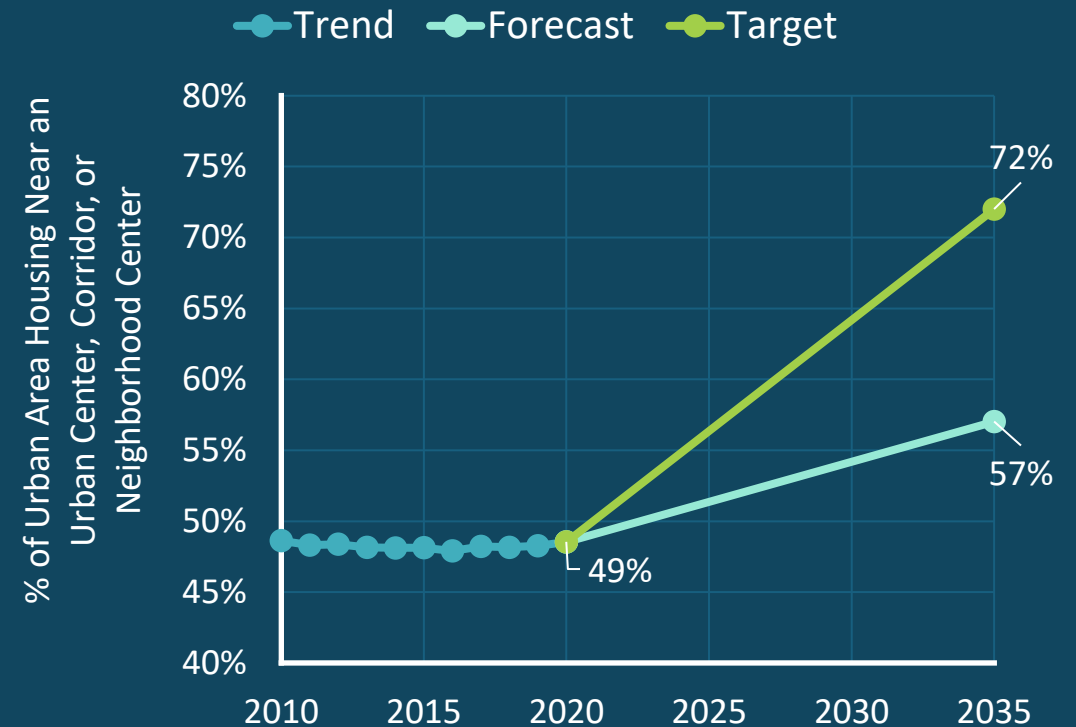


Sustainable Thurston: Land Use Targets

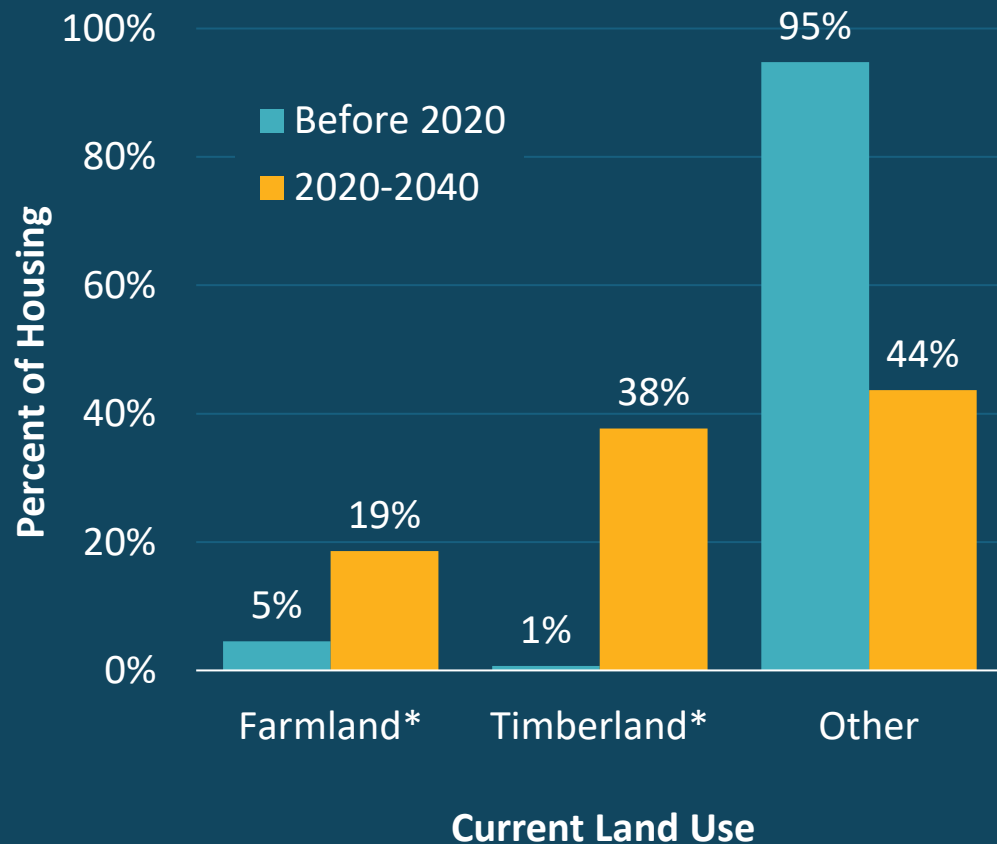
At least 95% of new housing between 2010 and 2035 in the urban areas



72% of urban area housing within ½ mile of an urban center, urban corridor, or neighborhood center



Natural Resource and Other Rural Lands



- Are we preserving natural resource lands/uses and rural character?

- County Comp. Plan
- Sustainable Thurston

*Farmland/timberland includes LTA/LTF/NA zones, properties in current use tax program, and properties with cultivated/pasture land covers.

How can we get closer to our Sustainable Thurston Targets?

Recommendations

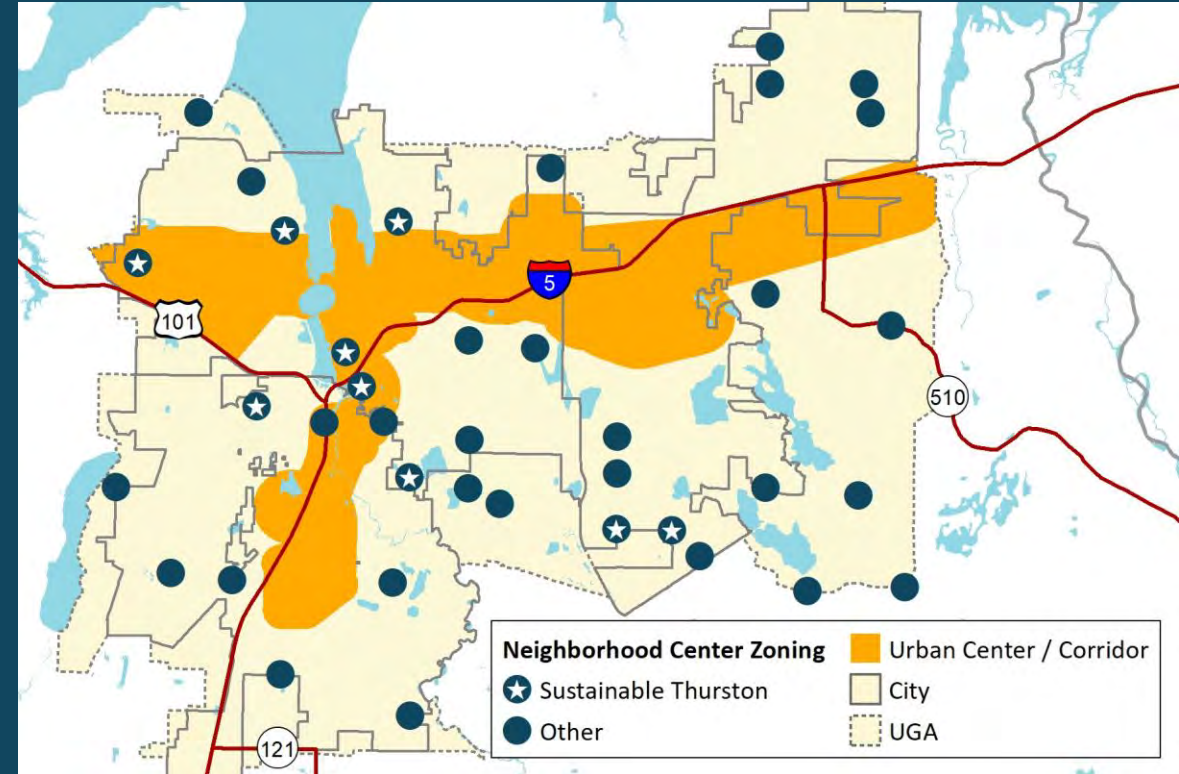
- Worked with our stakeholder group to identify strategies
 - Strategies are recommendations for 2025 Comp Plan updates
 - TRPC's land use model shows these strategies will get us closer to targets — but unlikely to reach them by 2035
- Articulate tradeoffs of development decisions — to housing affordability, climate impacts, habitat, agriculture, public health costs, equity

Buildable Lands Advisory Committee

- City of Lacey
- City of Olympia
- City of Rainier
- City of Tenino
- City of Tumwater
- City of Yelm
- Chehalis Tribe
- Intercity Transit
- LOTT Clean Water Alliance
- Nisqually Indian Tribe
- Olympia Master Builders
- Port of Olympia
- Prime Locations
- Thurston County
- Thurston County Chamber
- Thurston County Realtors
- Thurston Economic Development Council
- Dept. of Commerce
- Citizens

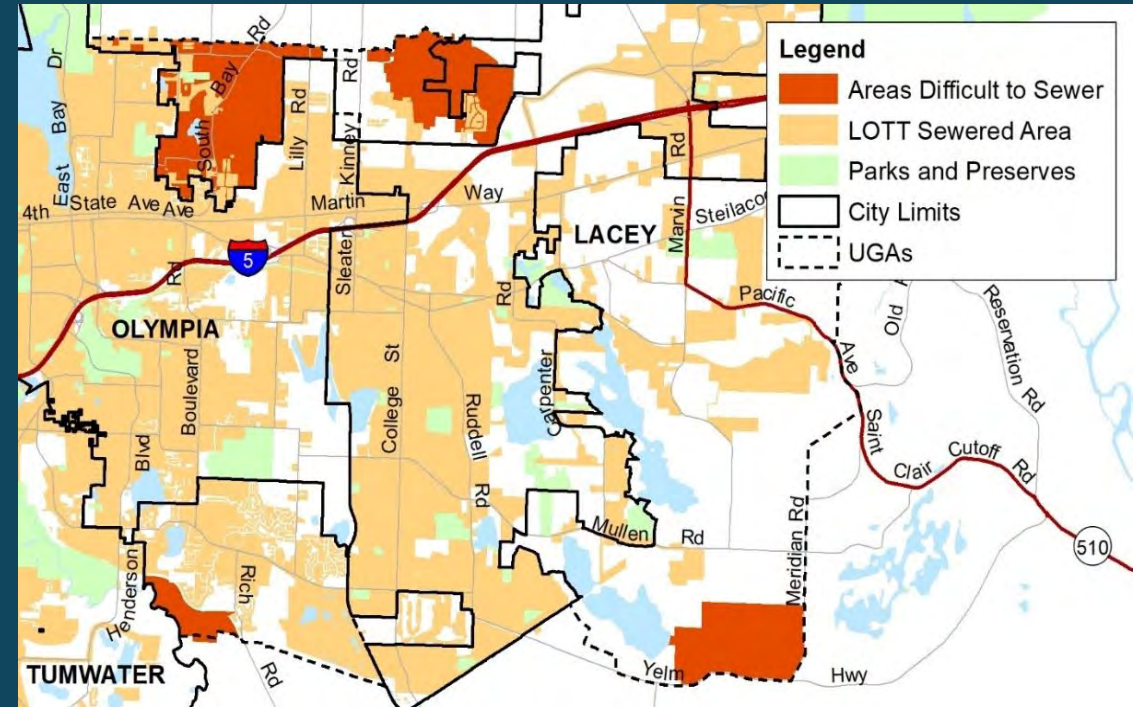
Recommendations — Urban Centers & Corridors

- Increase the amount of residential development in mixed use zones along corridors.
- Create incentives for redevelopment at key “opportunity sites” located along corridors.
- Increase the density of residential development near Neighborhood Centers, and create incentives to attract and support businesses to serve those households.



Recommendations — “Wider” Urban Areas

- Continue to expand middle-density housing options in low-medium-density residential zones.
- Consider options for areas where lack of infrastructure is a barrier to future development (including areas of UGA)
 - Infill properties: Invest to extend infrastructure to areas where there is not enough future development potential to pay for the improvements.
 - Edge of UGAs: Maintain low densities or remove areas from UGAs.



Recommendations — South County Cities

- Continue support for modest mixed-use growth, infill development, and increased amount of residential development in commercial centers.



Recommendations — Rural Areas

- Support strategies to preserve natural resource lands, including those used for agriculture and forestry, and support existing natural resource uses.
- Consider whether future residential density may support new rural commercial centers.



Next Steps

Upcoming

- 5/7 — Brief Thurston Regional Planning Council
- 5/19 — Brief Board of County Commissioners
- 6/4 — Tentative acceptance by TRPC, deliver to Thurston County

City/County Comprehensive Plan updates due in 2025

Buildable Lands

Questions?

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