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COMMUNITY PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Creating Solutions for Our Future

Joshua Cummings, Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Thurston County Planning Commission

FROM: Leah Davis, Associate Planner, Community Planning
Ashley Arai, Planning Manager, Community Planning

DATE: February 7, 2024

SUBJECT: Introduction to the Tumwater UGA Development Code Update

BACKGROUND

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires cities and counties with a certain rate of growth to develop Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) and participate in joint planning. The GMA also requires counties and cities to develop county-wide planning policies to help guide urban growth boundaries and joint planning efforts.

In 1988 Thurston County and the City of Tumwater developed the original boundaries of the UGA. Since that time, the area has been reduced through annexations and the removal of some areas deemed too difficult to develop for urban densities. The first Joint Plan that the county and Tumwater adopted was in 1995 and was not substantially updated until 2021. Joint Plans are a Comprehensive Plan for the UGA and contain a shared vision between the city and county for the next 20 years.

Title 22 - Tumwater Urban Growth Area Zoning of Thurston County Code are the development regulations adopted for the UGA and the way the county strives to meet the vision of the Joint Plan. A few of the general goals related to the vision of the UGA are: to increase density close to the cities to preserve resources like agriculture and forestry in the rural county; to increase population where services and utilities are available; and to align the UGA codes with the city codes to make annexations more seamless for residents.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

In 2021 during the Joint Plan update two zoning designations were eliminated, three zoning designations were changed based on current use or expected future demand for those zones, and the Airport Overlay zoning designation was expanded. The development code changes for these policy updates were all adopted concurrently with the Joint Plan.

The remaining sections in Title 22 are under review and should result in minor updates. The most significant change will enhance the existing development design standards to align with the city's more robust guidelines. The City of Tumwater adopted by reference an extensive document titled *Tumwater Design Guidelines*. To streamline permit review, County staff are incorporating aspects of the guidelines into the development code. The guidelines apply to multifamily residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial development. They include standards for parking lots, architectural styles and details, open space, landscaping, etc. The purpose of updating the Title 22 design guidelines is for continuity if and when parts of the UGA are annexed into the city.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Community Planning proposes the following as the schedule for review of this item:

- Mar-June 2024 – work sessions, public hearing, and recommendation
- July-September 2024 – BoCC work session and final action