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**COMMUNITY PLANNING &  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

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*Creating Solutions for Our Future*

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Thurston County Planning Commission

**FROM:** Allison Osterberg, Senior Planner  
Krosbie Carter, Associate Planner (*Emeritus*)

**DATE:** November 7, 2018

**SUBJECT:** Comprehensive Plan Update: Chapter 7 - Utilities

### **Background**

The Utilities chapter addresses utility services within Thurston County over the next 20 years. Virtually all land uses require one or more of the private utilities discussed in this Chapter. Local land use decisions and regulatory mandates drive the need for new or expanded utility facilities. In other words, utilities follow growth. Expansion of the utility systems is a function of the demand for reliable service that people, their land uses, and activities place on the systems.

### **What public feedback has the Utility chapter received?**

Over the past few months, staff have met with multiple stakeholder groups to discuss hopes and concerns for the future. A few of the group meetings and opportunities for feedback included:

- Comprehensive Plan Open Houses
- Nisqually Subarea Open House
- Storm and Surface Water Advisory Board (SSWAB)

Public comments received at the open houses centered around a desire for more renewable energy sources and policies encouraging solar energy in new developments. Additionally, citizens expressed both interest and concern regarding small cells technology and cell towers in the rural areas.

### **What has changed in the Utility chapter?**

The Growth Management Act requires an update the inventory and locations of existing and proposed utilities, including but not limited to electric, telecommunication and natural gas. These private utilities have been updated to reflect the most recent information available.

The Utility chapter has been revised to also include sections on public utilities, with a brief overview of County-owned and operated utility facilities, including Stormwater, Solid Waste, Water and Sewer. Goals and policies related to Stormwater were originally in this chapter, however the other County utility policies were in the Capital Facilitates Plan (CFP). This update has removed a majority of the utility policy language from the CFP and placed it in this chapter to allow citizens to easily identify all utility goals and policies in one chapter. Elements of publicly-owned utilities are still in other chapters of the Comprehensive Plan, as applicable.

### **Key Challenges**

As Thurston County evaluates the needs of our citizens over the next 20 years, key challenges related to public and private utility planning include:

- Responding to rapidly changing technology and consumer needs, while maintaining a system of aging infrastructure
- Ensuring rural areas of the county have sufficient access to communication technology to support economic opportunity, such as home-based businesses
- Supporting the development of infrastructure to enable the widespread integration of renewable energy sources
- Balancing the desire for greater access to utilities, such as wireless services, with the impacts of locating the physical infrastructure for such utilities
- Ensuring sufficient waste and water management in place to support a growing population.

### **Decision Points for Planning Commission Review**

- Consider whether the draft changes to Chapter 7 are clear and sufficiently describe and capture the community's interests in utilities, within the scope of the periodic update