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**COMMUNITY PLANNING &
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

Creating Solutions for Our Future

Joshua Cummings, Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Thurston County Planning Commission

FROM: Ian Lefcourte, Associate Planner
Allison Osterberg, Senior Planner

DATE: April 17, 2019

SUBJECT: Comprehensive Plan Update: Chapter 8 – Economic Development – Research Follow Up

Background

Chapter 8 of the Comprehensive Plan, Economic Development, provides a framework to promote economic opportunity for all citizens and to encourage economic growth. The chapter describes employment and workforce patterns in the county, labor sectors, wages, sales revenue, and sets policies to address county goals. For the Comprehensive Plan Update, Chapter 8 has been substantially revised in coordination with the Thurston Economic Development Council (EDC).

On January 9, 2019, Community Planning and Economic Development Staff presented a draft of the updated Economic Development Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission provided feedback and directed staff to conduct further research and add new content.

What was the Planning Commission's feedback?

The majority of feedback from the Planning Commission was generally focused on emphasizing the economic and cultural significance of agriculture. As such, staff added roughly four pages of agriculturally focused content. This included the addition of metrics to track agricultural economic trends. The chapter now contains United States Department of Agriculture Census data to track farms by acreage and by sales. The general trend in Thurston County from 2007 to 2012 was an increasing number of smaller farms. Staff also added further discussion on the

importance of preserving agricultural lands, existing tools and programs to help preserve agricultural lands, and historical trends in the loss of agricultural lands. Other, nonagricultural feedback was limited but included a variety of topics, such as discussion on the rise of online retailers and the decrease of local “big box” retailers.

The goals and policies remain largely the same. Generally, the proposed changes to the goals and policies add language to existing goals and policies to draw attention to the rural economy and to worker development, as well as to support ongoing and new partnerships across the region. Per the Planning Commission, a policy was added to explore fostering partnerships where farms provide a consistent supply of fresh farm goods to major institutions.

Decision Points

- Consider whether the updated changes to the Chapter 8 draft are clear and sufficiently describe and capture the community’s interests in economic development, within the scope of the periodic update.