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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
Maya Teeple, Associate Planner

DATE: July 24, 2019

SUBJECT: Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update (Core Items) – Public Comments

Public Comments Received on Core Items of the Comprehensive Plan

As part of the public process for the Thurston County Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, Community Planning staff solicited public comments from June 18, 2019 to July 10, 2019. At the direction of the Thurston County Board of Commissioners, the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update has been split into two on-going tracks; core items and continuing items. As of July 24, 2019, the core items have been authored, presented to the planning commission, and made available for the public, culminating in a duly-noticed public hearing on July 10, 2019. Only public comments related to the core items of the Comprehensive Plan Update are included in this memorandum and the current public comment matrix, available online.

Number of Public Comments

The County has received 60 written public comments from 45 unique commenters. Because some comments addressed topics that are components of multiple chapters, the comments have been organized by topic:

- 32 Agriculture (53% of the written public comments)
- 11 Water Availability (18%)
- 4 Wireless (7%)
- 3 Other (5%)
- 2 Evergreen Land Use Amendment (3%)
- 2 Transportation (3%)
- 1 Environment (2%)
- 1 Land Use (2%)
- 1 Scheduling (2%)
- 1 Shellfish (2%)

- 1 Stormwater (2%)

In addition, the County received 14 oral public comments on core items that were presented at planning commission meetings. The comments by topic is as follows:

- 6 Agriculture (43% of oral public comments)
- 2 Environment (14%)
- 2 Evergreen Land Use Amendment (14%)
- 2 Other (14%)
- 1 Stormwater (7%)
- 1 Communication (7%)

Public Comment Themes

Agriculture was overwhelmingly the most mentioned theme in the public comments, representing 52% of all written and oral public comments. The input for agriculture focused on; the continued trend of farmland acreage loss, narrative/language around agricultural policies, adding emphasis on the value of small farms to the local economy, changes to long-term agricultural lands designation criteria, using Conservation Futures for agricultural preservation and supporting a no-net-loss policy for agricultural lands. For example, many public comments requested the 20-acre threshold for long-term agricultural lands designation be lowered down to 5 acres or less. However, changes to long-term agricultural lands designation criteria are outside the scope of the core Comprehensive Plan Update. Other requests on background information and data information have largely been integrated into the comprehensive plan drafts.

Other themes:

- All the comments about the wireless topic were in support of stricter restrictions on cell tower placement, and expressed concerns about the potential impacts of cell towers on human health. The Wireless Code Update is moving along a separate track from the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update.
- Water Availability comments were general comments supporting the protection of groundwater.
- The Evergreen State College Land Use Amendment had comments which supported the change. Other comments identified special projects that should still require special use permits. The proposed amendment addresses these concerns.
- Requests for specific sites to be considered for the Historic Chapter.
- Concerns about the expansion of industrial aquaculture.

Public Comment Collection

The public comments for the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update of core items have been collected into a single PDF file and made available to planning commissioners and the public. The [collected PDF](#) is available on the County website.