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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: Ian Lefcourte, Associate Planner
Allison Osterberg, Senior Planner

DATE: December 5, 2018

SUBJECT: Comprehensive Plan Update: Chapter 10 – Archeological and Historic Resources

Background

Chapter 10 of the Comprehensive Plan, Archaeological and Historic Resources, provides a framework for the identification, documentation, protection, and rehabilitation of cultural resources. The chapter sets goals, objectives and policies for the protection of these resources. There are no major proposed changes to Chapter 10.

The Chapter details existing archaeological and historic preservation policies and practices, and the role of the Thurston County Historic Commission. This includes preservation programs at the state and federal level. The Chapter also includes an inventory of identified historic resources.

The Archaeological and Historic Resources element supports several other Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) goals. For example, the rehabilitation of historic housing can be less costly than constructing new buildings, which supports the affordable housing goal. Historic preservation is an important component of downtown revitalization projects, which helps the economic development goal. Historic resources enhance a community's image for residents, tourists, and business recruitment efforts. This enhanced image can be leveraged with historic preservation to be a proven and cost-effective community development tool.

What public feedback has the Archeological and Historic Resources chapter received?

The existing chapter was reviewed by the Thurston County Historic Commission, a 12-member advisory board that promotes and supports activities related to county history and cultural resources. The Commission made a series of suggestions to update the chapter in the fall of 2017 that were reviewed at the November 8, 2017, Historic Commission meeting. Staff incorporated those suggested changes into the draft Chapter 10.

Members of the general public also had an opportunity to provide general feedback on historic and cultural resources during the Open Houses for the Comprehensive Plan held in Spring 2018, but no comments specific to this chapter were provided to the county at that time.

What has changed in the Archeological and Historic chapter?

There are no major changes proposed, as none were identified for this chapter in the scope of work for the update approved by the Board of County Commissioners. Minor changes expand the background planning context by listing relevant county wide planning policies. The goals and policies remain largely the same. The few proposed changes to the goals and policies represent an emphasis on the economic development potential of historic preservation and adaptive reuse, and were recommended additions by staff after reviewing other historic preservation standards around Washington and public input.

Critical Issues

Washington’s historic and archaeological resources are similar to our state’s rich natural resources in many ways. Archaeological and historic resources are limited and warrant protection. Like wetlands, forestlands, shorelines, agricultural lands, and other natural resource lands, cultural resources are lost forever if destroyed. The Archaeological and Historic Resources Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan protects these resources and helps sustain Thurston County’s quality of life.

Critical issues confronting decision-makers planning for the county’s archaeological and historic resources include:

- Keeping the historic inventory and historic register up to date;
- Providing adequate resources and incentives to maintain historic resources; and
- Coordinating historic preservation with economic development plans and programs.

Decision Points

- Consider whether the draft changes to Chapter 10 are clear and sufficiently describe and capture the community’s interests in historic and archeological resources, within the scope of the periodic update.