

**Rochester Subarea Plan Update
2017 Comprehensive Plan Amendment Docket (Item CPA-7)
Public Hearing Staff Report**

Date: January 2, 2020

Public Hearing Date: January 8, 2020

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Proponent/Applicant: Thurston County
Community Planning and Economic Development

Proposal Description: Update the Rochester Subarea Plan 2018-2019 Official Comprehensive Plan Docket, Amendment Item 7

Action Requested: Amend the Rochester Subarea Plan of the Thurston County Comprehensive Plan to include the proposed changes

Location: Countywide

Map Changes Text Changes Both Affects Comprehensive Plans/documents
 Affected Jurisdictions: Thurston County

1 **ISSUE:**

2 Thurston County's Rochester Subarea Plan is a 20-year plan that was last updated in 1996 and is
3 part of the County's Comprehensive Plan as an Optional Comprehensive Plan Element. Under
4 Washington's Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.130), counties and cities are required to
5 periodically conduct a review of their Comprehensive Plan and development regulations to bring
6 them in line with relevant changes to the GMA and to update goals and policies based on changes
7 to land use and population growth. Subarea Plans are Optional Comprehensive Plan Elements and
8 are consistent with the County's Comprehensive Plan (RCW 36.70A.080).

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10 This hearing is to receive public testimony and consider draft options for the Rochester Subarea
11 Plan update.

12
13 **BACKGROUND:**

14 Thurston County's Rochester Subarea Plan was first adopted in 1978 and the last major update
15 was in 1996. The 1996 plan was completed by Earth Tech (formerly Barrett Consulting Group) and
16 encompassed approximately 9,500 acres referred to as the Rochester Growth Study Area (GSA),
17 which included Grand Mound. The primary purpose of this study was to reevaluate the GSA's land
18 use designations and consistency with the County's Comprehensive Plan, the Grand Mound Urban

1 Growth Area (UGA) and the Growth Management Act (GMA). The outcome and recommendation
2 of the 1996 public participation process for the final land use plan was most consistent with a rural
3 emphasis, with a town core centered in Rochester.

4 5 **Subarea Plan Update:**

6 In 2018, the Board approved the Official Docket Item 7, Grand Mound and Rochester Subarea Plan
7 Update as part of the Comprehensive Plan Docket. Over twenty years later, the importance of
8 preservation of rural character, agriculture and open space still resonates with the residents of
9 Rochester.

10 11 **PUBLIC OUTREACH/PARTICIPATION:**

12 Public participation is an essential component for updating the Rochester Subarea Plan. The
13 Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A) requires early and continuous public participation in the
14 development and update of local comprehensive plans and regulations. Citizens can learn about,
15 become engaged in and influence decisions about local actions. This is an opportunity to inform
16 and educate residents, as well as other stakeholders about the update process and solicit feedback
17 on planning issues. Public engagement throughout the planning process is essential to ensure the
18 vision and goals set in the subarea plans reflect the community's objectives. Several Open House
19 events and community engagement meetings were held in 2018 and 2019 as part of the public
20 process for all subareas. The public engagement to date includes:

- 21 • Open Houses
 - 22 ○ **February 24, 2018** – Rochester Open House
 - 23 ○ **March 8, 2018** – Grand Mound Open House
 - 24 ○ **November 7, 2018** – Rochester Open House
 - 25 ○ **November 13, 2019** – Rochester Open House
- 26 • Planning Commission Meetings (4 meetings – all are open to the public)
- 27 • Grand Mound Rochester Chamber of Commerce Meetings
- 28 • South Thurston Economic Development Meetings (STEDI)

29 30 **NOTIFICATION:**

31 Written notice of the public hearing was published in *The Olympian* on December 18, 2019. A
32 press release was issued on December 27, 2019. Thurston County Community Planning updated
33 the website with all available documents being considered at the hearing prior to release of the
34 December 18, 2019 legal notice.

35 36 **PLANNING COMMISSION REVIEW:**

37 The Planning Commission has held multiple work sessions beginning in April 2019 to discuss the
38 Rochester Subarea Plan Update.

39
40 The following PC work sessions have been held:

- 41 • **April 3, 2019** – Subarea planning process update
- 42 • **June 5, 2019** – Rochester and Grand Mound Subarea plan follow-up study session
- 43 • **September 4, 2019** – Rochester Subarea Plan update – propose options
- 44 • **November 6, 2019** – Review new proposed option #3 - Draft Rochester Subarea Plan

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46 Attachments and other supporting materials for these meetings can be viewed at:
47 www.grandmoundplanning.org

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2 **DEPARTMENT ANALYSIS:**
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4 **1996 Rochester Subarea Plan.** Staff reviewed and provided analysis of the current plan and found
5 that the existing rural residential land use for Rochester is in alignment with the County’s current
6 Comprehensive Plan, therefore a majority of the 1996 Rochester Subarea Plan is no longer
7 applicable. The elements of the subarea plan relating to land use, critical areas, housing,
8 transportation, and capital facilities are all included in the 2019 Comprehensive Plan update.
9 During the September 4, 2019 Planning Commission meeting, a table was presented to show the
10 elements from the Rochester Plan and the Chapters they relate to in the 2019 Comprehensive Plan
11 Update. Option #1 proposes eliminating the need for a Rochester Subarea Plan.
12

13 The proposed Option #2 updates the current 1996 Rochester Subarea Plan with updates to items
14 that are outdated such as population forecasts, housing estimates, existing land use and densities,
15 in addition to updates of all relevant maps for the area.
16

17 An additional Option #3 was requested by the Planning Commission, and proposes to develop a
18 new draft subarea plan for Rochester that is in alignment with the core chapters of the 2019
19 Comprehensive Plan update. Essential elements specific to Rochester would be captured and
20 summarized in this new plan and incorporate components of the public outreach that was
21 conducted in the past two years. It also integrates elements of the Main Street Rochester Project
22 and the Multimodal Action Plan. In addition, Goals and Actions items were included to assist with
23 future planning efforts in the Rochester area.
24

25 **OPTIONS:**

- 26 1. Repeal the Rochester Subarea Plan. Analysis and summary table of chapters display that
27 all essential elements of the plan are all included in the 2019 Comprehensive Plan update.
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29 2. Amend the 1996 Rochester Subarea Plan with new demographic information, which
30 includes updates to population forecasts, housing estimates, existing land use and
31 densities, in addition to updates of all relevant maps for the area.
32
33 3. Repeal the 1996 Rochester Subarea Plan and adopt a new, updated Rochester Subarea
34 Plan that is in alignment with the chapters of Comprehensive Plan update and proposes
35 Goals and Actions for Rochester.
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37 **STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

38 Community Planning staff recommends Option 3, that the Planning Commission forward a
39 recommendation of approval to the Thurston County Board of County Commissioners for the
40 new updated Rochester Subarea Plan.
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42 **ATTACHMENTS: Draft 2020 Rochester Subarea Plan**
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