



Community Agriculture

Long-Term Agriculture Designation & Zoning Review

**Part of the Community-Driven Review of
Agriculture project**

Work Session # 6 – August 2, 2023

Today's Work Session:

- ▶ Summary of Decision Points for PC
- ▶ Final Recommendation
- ▶ Draft findings

Summary of Decisions from July 5 and July 19 Work Session

- ▶ Delay cluster requirement for further consideration with periodic update
- ▶ Exclude existing mines from agricultural resource designation
- ▶ Revise co-designation policy to limit accessory mining uses to non-prime soils
- ▶ Investigate Farmlands of Statewide Importance further as part of periodic update
- ▶ Use a refined soils list
 - ▶ Exclude soils of a land capability classification 5 and below.
 - ▶ Exclude soils of a land capability classification 4w.
- ▶ Revise some agricultural designation criteria:
 - ▶ Require a parcel have 75% or more prime farmlands to be included.
 - ▶ Maintain a predominant parcel size of 20 acres.
 - ▶ Reduce the agricultural block size requirement to 40 acres.

Remaining Decision Points for Planning Commission

- ▶ Recommendation on code changes to increase flexibility and clarify standards for agricultural operators?
- ▶ Exclude 4s soils, or exclude 4s soils if National Commodity Crop Productivity Index (NCCPI) productivity rating is below 0.5?

Code updates

In response to comments from stakeholder group and informed by outreach efforts

- Update Agritourism Overlay District
 - Clarify uses and development standards
 - Remove barriers like minimum parcel size
 - Streamline permit processes
- Expand uses in agriculture zoning
 - Give farmers flexibility to diversify income and strengthen Ag economy
 - Streamline permit processes



Updated LTA Zoning Standards

- Update Ag use definitions for clarity
- Administrative review process for uses / structures under 20,000 SF
- Expanded list of Ag uses

| Proposed NEW Primary Uses | Proposed NEW Secondary Uses (Non-prime farmland soils) |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ag composting• Ag services (i.e. soil testing, farrier, fertilizing services, livestock vet)• Animal production, boarding and slaughtering• Aquaculture, Fish Processing and Hatcheries• Farm kitchen• Stockyard | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ag Crop Production Facility• Ag Supply Sales• Biochar Production Facility• Family Daycare Provider• Nurseries/Greenhouses Retail• Renewable Energy Facilities• Riding Stable, Arena, Academy |



Soils Analysis – Land Capability Classification System

- Groups soils into 8 classes based on non-irrigated agricultural capability
- Assigns subclasses to describe limitations or hazards (erosion, wetness, soil limitations, climate)
- Many new prime farmland soils are Class 4s – prone to very severe limitations and/or very careful management

Class 4s Soils

- Represents 26% of Baseline acreage
- Stony soils prone to drought
- Priority habitat for Mazama Pocket Gopher, Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly and Vesper Sparrow (4D rule for Ag)
- Soils also conserved through HCP, Sentinel Lands and other state/federal prairie conservation efforts

How are 4s soils used for existing agriculture?

| Soil Type | Total Acres* | Acres that Intersect w/ Existing Farms | Percent existing farms | NCCPI Rating |
|--|--------------|--|------------------------|--------------|
| Spanaway gravelly sandy loam, 0-3% slopes | 16,655 | 5,602 | 34% | 0.549 |
| Spanaway-Nisqually complex, 2-10% slopes | 7,399 | 3,258 | 44% | 0.559 |
| Nisqually loamy fine sand, 0-3% slopes | 2,144 | 1,083 | 51% | 0.589 |

*Acreage of each 4s soil across the County (excluding within JBLM, cities, and UGAs)

THURSTON COUNTY LONG-TERM AGRICULTURE

Map 1

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-  Possible New LTA Zoning based on Revised Designation Criteria
-  LTA and NA Zoning
-  City Limits
-  Urban Growth Area (UGA)

Map 1 Policies

Adds about **3,000 acres** to agriculture zoning (**41%** existing farms).

- Used for **or** capable of being used for commercial agriculture
- **≥75%** prime farmland soils (**2022** USDA Soil Survey)
 - Soils with LCC rating of 1-3
- Blocks of agriculture land **40+ acres**
- Parcels **20 acres** and greater

0 1/2 1 2 3 4
Miles



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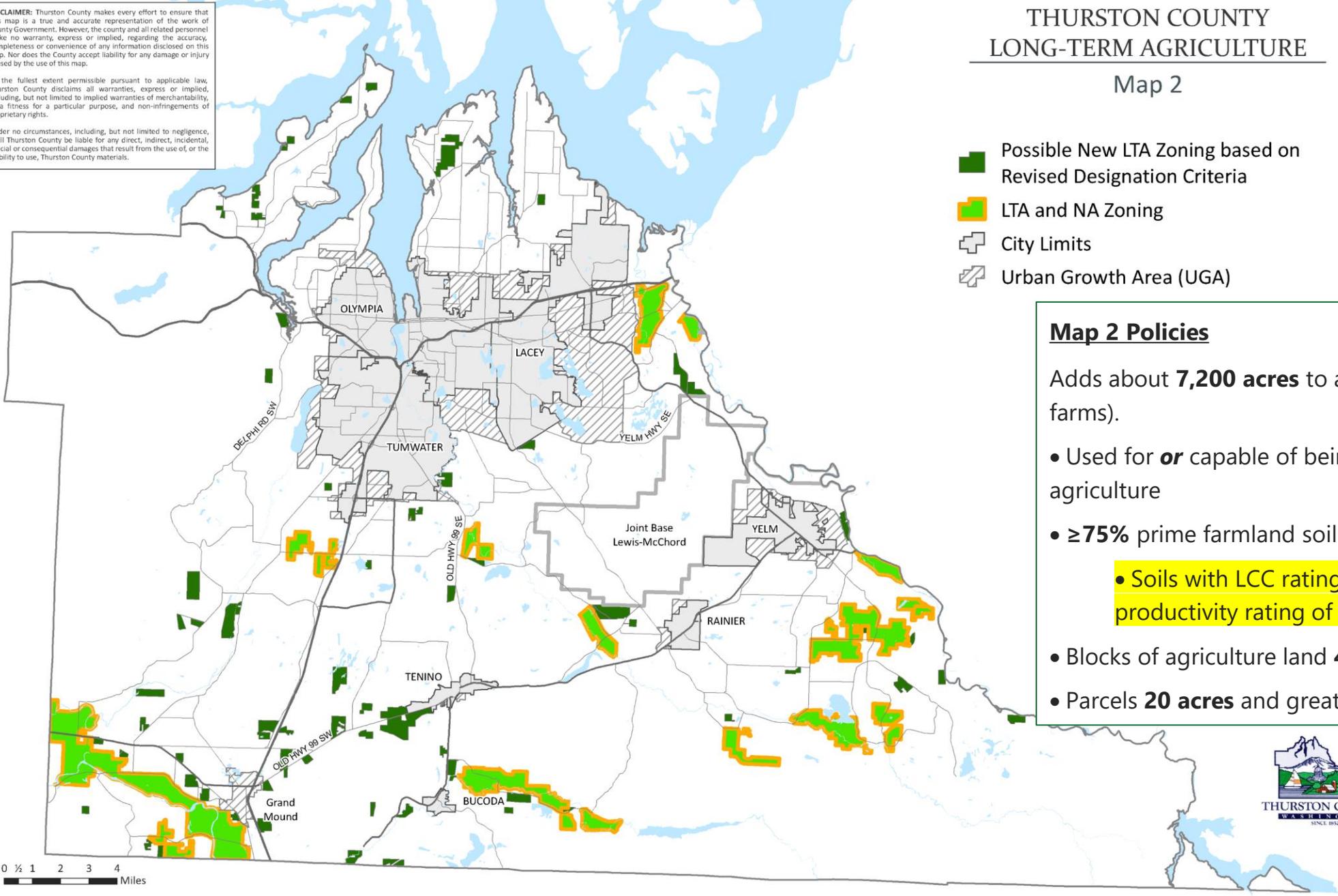
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THURSTON COUNTY LONG-TERM AGRICULTURE

Map 2

-  Possible New LTA Zoning based on Revised Designation Criteria
-  LTA and NA Zoning
-  City Limits
-  Urban Growth Area (UGA)



Map 2 Policies

Adds about **7,200 acres** to agriculture zoning (**56%** existing farms).

- Used for **or** capable of being used for commercial agriculture
- **≥75%** prime farmland soils (**2022 USDA Soil Survey**)
 - Soils with LCC rating of 1-3, or 4s with NCCPI productivity rating of greater than 0.5.
- Blocks of agriculture land **40+ acres**
- Parcels **20 acres** and greater



The background features a stylized sun with thick, light orange rays in the upper half and a small green plant with three leaves in the center. Below the plant are several thick, light green wavy lines representing grass or hills. The entire scene is set against a white background with dark green geometric shapes on the left and right sides.

Next Steps

Draft Motion

- ▶ Previous decision points of Planning Commission will all be recapped in the recommendation letter.

“Move to recommend approval of the agriculture zoning update and amendment to designation criteria as discussed by previous PC decision points. Further move to recommend approval of associated code changes to Chapters 20.03, 20.08A, 20.08G, and 20.54 to increase flexibility for agricultural operators, streamline permit processes, and clarify procedures.”

Draft Findings

1. This item was included on the 2022-2023 Comprehensive Plan Docket as Item # CPA-16.
2. This item was first docketed in 2020.
3. The Thurston County Planning Commission held a duly noticed public hearing on June 21, 2023, as required by Thurston County Code Chapter 2.05 Growth Management Public Participation.
4. The Planning Commission's recommendation reflects consideration of significant written and oral public comment received and extensive review of the proposed amendment.
5. The Board of County Commissioners will hold an additional public hearing on agriculture zoning update to receive further input on any revised options.
6. Delay of review of the clustering concept until the time of the periodic comprehensive plan update will allow the county to review the concept holistically with required updates to the housing element and consider other concepts, like density bonuses.

Draft Findings

7. Review of Farmlands of Statewide Importance until the time of the periodic comprehensive plan update will allow a thorough review and the county to consider other innovative options to protect agriculture beyond the Long-Term Agriculture designation and zoning.
8. Existing mines that are classified as “pits, gravel” may have soil surveys that predate use as a mining operation. Farmland soils are unlikely to be conserved properly onsite unless the reclamation plan is specific to agriculture.
9. Accessory uses to mining operations should be allowed to locate on the same property as a mining operation in the event of co-designated mineral and agricultural land. Underlying agricultural soils should be protected.
10. After extensive review of public comment and stakeholder group work, the Planning Commission finds that revision to some agricultural designation criteria, like the soils list, percentage of a parcel that must have prime soils and agricultural block size criteria should be revised to consider alternatives in order to conserve the appropriate lands for agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance.

Draft Findings

11. A refined soils list using land capability classification, land capability classification suffix, and productivity levels based on the National Commodity Crop Productivity Index (NCCPI) rating was used to inform the Planning Commission's decision on which soils should be protected as Long-Term Agriculture for long-term commercial significance. This refined soils list further excludes some prime farmland soil types based on severe limitations to agricultural production without intensive management and additional inputs.
12. The Planning Commission finds that zoning as long-term agriculture is one tool to protect agricultural lands for future use, and that other incentives and protections for farming are equally or more important, to include reducing regulatory burden, streamlining permit processes, reducing startup costs and permitting fees, increasing availability of processing and farm equipment, and more. While this docket item is narrow in scope and not intended to address all other tools that support agricultural operations, it is important that the County continues to improve in other areas to support agriculture in order to maintain and enhance the local agricultural industry.

Next Steps

- ▶ **Open House:** Monday Aug 21, 2023
 - ▶ Mailing notice
- ▶ **BOCC Review begins:** Wednesday Aug 23, 2023

Thank you!

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