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| January 11, 2016 |

# Introduction/Background Information

Goal 9 of Oregon’s statewide planning goals requires cities and counties to plan for and support economic activity and development. The goal and its administrative rules call for cities and counties that have jurisdiction within an urban growth boundary to identify projected future employment needs through preparation of an economic opportunities analysis and to ensure that adequate land is available to meet those future needs. The vast majority of non-resourced based economic activity in Multnomah County occurs in the urban areas of the County and Multnomah County is not required to prepare an economic opportunities analysis for the rural portions of the County.

In the rural areas of the County which are the focus of this Comprehensive Plan, most economic activity is related to farm and forest resource-based uses. A certain amount of economic activity also occurs in areas designated for rural commercial or industrial use, primarily within designated rural centers or through home occupations which are allowed in all rural zones. As a result, this chapter includes a number of general policies supporting economic development within the County, as well as references to other Plan policies that support rural employment and other economic development activities.

This chapter also provides an overview of conditions and planning issues associated with rural economic development, along with Comprehensive Plan policies and strategies to address them.

## economic Conditions

Rural Multnomah County is generally better off economically than the County as whole. According to 2012 US Census data, the rural areas of Multnomah County have a higher median household income than the County as a whole. West County generally has higher income, lower unemployment rate, and lower poverty rate than Multnomah County as a whole. Similarly, East County also has higher income and lower poverty rate, however the unemployment rate is higher than Multnomah County as a whole.

Table 1 – 2012 Multnomah County Farm Economic Summary[[1]](#footnote-2)

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| Number of Farms | 598 |
| Land in Farms | 29,983 acres |
| Average Size of Farm | 50 acres |
| Market Value of Products Sold | $68,936,000 |
| Average Per Farm | $115,278 |

Figure 1 – Land in Farms, 2012 by Land Use

Table 2 – 2012 Multnomah County Farm Economic Characteristics

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| Farms by value of sales: | Quantity |
| Less than $1,000 | 127 |
| $1,000 to $2,499 | 94 |
| $2,500 to $4,999 | 108 |
| $5,000 to $9,999 | 89 |
| $10,000 to $19,999 | 51 |
| $20,000 to $24,999 | 12 |
| $25,000 to $39,999 | 19 |
| $40,000 to $49,999 | 13 |
| $50,000 to $99,999 | 28 |
| $100,000 to $249,999 | 29 |
| $250,000 to $499,999 | 9 |
| $500,000 or more | 19 |

## relevant studies and planning processes

A variety of state, regional, and local plans and policies are relevant to planning for Multnomah County’s rural economy, including the following.

Oregon’s **Statewide Planning Goals** provide comprehensive policy direction for local governments to follow. Goal 9, Economic Development, calls for diversification and improvement of the economy. Most Goal 9 requirements focus on identifying and planning for economic opportunities in urban areas; for rural areas, requirements are relatively limited.

**Multnomah County’s Zoning Code** is organized by rural and urban subareas, overall administrative procedures, and general building regulations. The rural and urban subareas (Rural Zoning Code and Urban Zoning Code) contain detailed descriptions of zoning districts and specify what uses are allowed outright or conditionally in each zone. In addition, the codes contain procedures for various land use issues, including design review, variances, and land divisions. The administrative procedures are the processes and procedures by which the County reviews and decides upon applications for all permits relating to the use of land. The building regulations, applicable to most unincorporated areas, includes permit processes for electrical, plumbing, and grading, as well as street standards.

The state **Unincorporated Communities Rule** prescribes what type of commercial, retail, and industrial development can be allowed within unincorporated communities and other rural areas, including limits on the size of individual uses and the area they can serve.

## key planning issues and supporting information

A number of key planning issues affect economic planning policies and practices in the rural portions of Multnomah County.

* **Farm and forest land policies**. One of the primary intentions of the policies found in Chapters 3 and 4 of this Plan (Farm and Forest lands) is to promote agricultural and forest production activities which enhance the rural economy of Multnomah County. Policies related to farm stands, agri-tourism, and wineries also support the area’s rural economy while also addressing potential impacts of those uses and activities on surrounding properties, residents, and farming and forestry operations.
* **Rural centers land use**. Designated rural centers are the primary location for non-resource based economic activity in the County. Policies associated with rural centers found in Chapter 2 of this Plan guide and support development of commercial retail, service, office, and industrial uses in these areas, including promoting re-use of existing buildings and providing jobs and shopping opportunities for people within the County’s rural centers and surrounding rural areas.
* **Home occupations**. There is broad citizen support for the ability to work in home-based occupations in the rural areas of the County. State law and the County’s Zoning Code include provisions allowing for home occupations which are affirmed by policy language in this chapter.

# goal, policies and strategies

**Goal**: To support the rural economy of the County, including farm and forest production, as well as commercial, industrial, office, and retail activities; to do so consistent with available infrastructure and resources, in compatibility with other land uses, and in compliance with state and local goals and laws.

## policies and strategies applicable County-wide

The policies in this section focus on broad support for economic activity within the County, as well as for agriculture and forestry operations, economic activity within rural centers or other areas allowing commercial, office, or industrial uses, and for home occupations.

* 1. Prioritize and encourage economic development investments and projects that are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
  2. Encourage the retention and creation of employment opportunities and economic development projects that require a skilled work force and generate family wage jobs, and that meet the needs of business, industry, and the community.
  3. Direct economic development public expenditures and capital improvements projects into designated rural centers which support the timely, orderly, and efficient growth and development of these centers.
  4. Support economic development investments and land use actions which will:

1. Promote agriculture and timber production as economic drivers;
2. Maximize the use of developable sites zoned for commercial and industrial uses;
3. Recognize the importance of home occupations as a valid employment option for County residents.
   1. Actively support community-based economic revitalization and development efforts which create employment opportunities, generate business investment capital, and improve the attractiveness and marketability of commercial and industrial sites.
   2. Encourage agricultural and timber processing industries which will improve the economic viability of farm and forest production within the County. The location of these processing facilities must be carefully balanced with the protection of agricultural and timber production outside the urban growth boundaries.
   3. Recognize the importance of river transportation to the regional transportation system and to the local and state economy and encourage the continued maintenance of, and access to, shipping channels in support of the movement of goods.
   4. Allow for home occupations wherever dwellings are permitted in order to assist in developing new business opportunities and to increase convenience to residents, while considering and minimizing impacts on adjacent land uses.

## policies and strategies applicable to individual rural planning areas

*There are no rural economy policies specific to individual Rural Planning Areas.*

1. 2012 Census of Agriculture [↑](#footnote-ref-2)