

CHAPTER 9

RURAL ECONOMY



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-resource 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.

“We envision working with all available resources to promote and encourage forest and farm economic development projects and to create conservation land trusts.”

- East of Sandy Community Vision





Economic Conditions

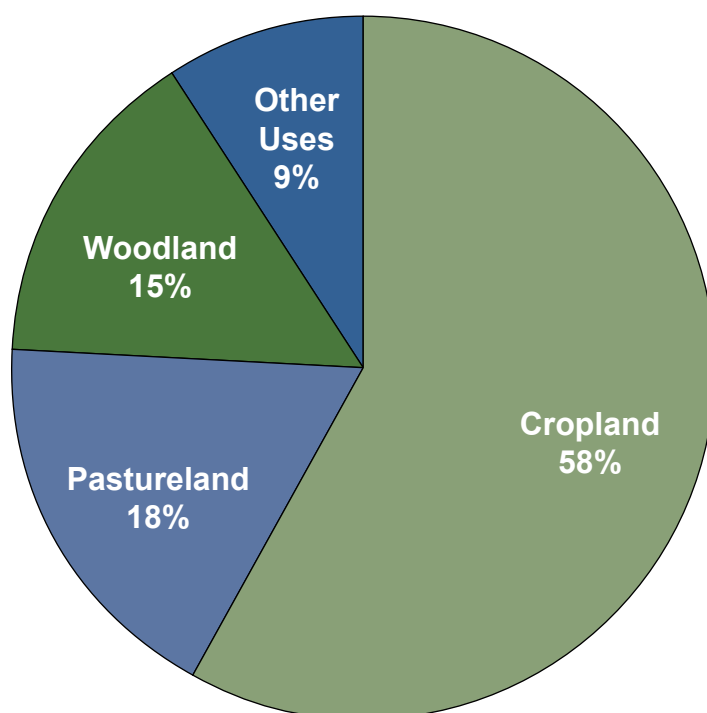
Rural Multnomah County is generally better off economically than the County as whole. According to 2012 US Census data, the rural areas of Multnomah County have a higher median household income than the County as a whole. West County generally has higher income, lower unemployment rate, and lower poverty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

There are 598 farms in Multnomah County, generating almost \$70 million in value of farm products sold. A small percentage of these farms are located inside city limits and the urban growth boundary.

Table 1 – 2012 Multnomah County Farm Economic Summary¹

Number of Farms	598
Land in Farms	29,983 acres
Average Size of Farm	50 acres
Market Value of Product Sold	\$68,936,000
Average per Farm	\$115,278

Figure 1 – Multnomah County Land in Farms, 2012 by Land Use¹



¹ 2012 Census of Agriculture



Table 2 – 2012 Multnomah County Farm Economic Characteristics²

FARMS BY VALUE OF SALES	NUMBER OF FARMS
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.

- 9.1** Prioritize and encourage economic development investments and projects that are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
- 9.2** 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.
- 9.3** 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.
- 9.4** 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.
- 9.5** 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.
- 9.6** 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.



- 9.7** Recognize the importance of the region's river, rail, and road systems to the local and state economy by encouraging the continued maintenance of the river navigation system, rail lines, and highway and maintaining access to shipping channels in support of the movement of goods. Maintenance of the river navigation system includes maintenance of structures such as navigation aids, river gages and mooring buoys, as well as maintaining channel depth.
- 9.8** 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 Subareas

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

