



**TO:** City Council and Planning Commission

**FROM:** The Downtown Strategy Stakeholder Work Group

**DATE:** November 14, 2016

**SUBJECT:** The Downtown Strategy

We, along with the City staff/consultant planning team, are pleased to submit this draft Olympia Downtown Strategy (ODS) for your consideration. We have done our best to respond to Council's direction as stated in the scope of the work for the Downtown Strategy. The process to produce the strategy has emphasized extensive public engagement, including:

- An average of 100 attendees at each of 5 public work sessions and open houses;
- A total of 3,936 responses to 4 web-based surveys;
- Two forums hosted jointly with the Economic Development Council, including participation from 30 members of the business and development community;
- Over 30 special topic meetings with interested parties;
- 10 Stakeholder Work Group meetings during which we reviewed public input and staff planning team work, brainstormed ideas, sketched alternative scenarios, advised on public work sessions, and provided direction to the planning team.

We believe that the Downtown Strategy we are forwarding reflects the general directions and public preferences resulting from the public engagement process.

In looking back over this roughly one year process, we observe the following:

- The public process presented a good example of how to build a plan around a collective community vision
- A huge amount of effort was devoted to this and over 3000 citizens from the region were involved
- The number of people who participated is reflective of how much our community cares about downtown
- The process offered opportunities to learn about issues and understand diverse perspectives within the community
- The various facets of the strategy were considered in a holistic way that enabled us to see how diverse actions are interconnected and unite to achieve the variety of goals
- Over the year, individual stakeholder work group members participated in workshops and events, helped other people stay connected and not only brought their own views to the table but others' as well



- The will of the people was taken seriously, and the strategy is reflective of the feedback provided during the stakeholder work group meetings, survey results and results from public workshops and the final open house.
- The strategy includes actions that will provide economic benefit not just downtown businesses and the city, but to the entire of Thurston County
- We feel very optimistic about downtown's future, and enthused to see new housing development planned for downtown
- The actions proposed in the strategy will enhance, promote and continue positive developments
- To implement these, sustained - and in a few cases - additional resources will be needed
- The housing strategy in particular is essential to achieve and maintain the diversity of housing envisioned for downtown. We encourage you to support dedicated and sustained resources for the downtown housing strategy, understanding this effort may commence following a homelessness response plan
- The Downtown Strategy is an important legacy project for Olympia, and we wholeheartedly support its implementation

In conclusion, we urge you to positively consider this strategy and incorporate its recommendations into the City's upcoming activities.