Public Safety

What Olympia Values:
Olympians value the protection our police, fire, and emergency medical services provide, as well as the proactive steps public safety partners take to prepare for and manage impacts from natural disasters and other emergencies. They also value code enforcement services that help maintain the safety and appeal of our diverse neighborhoods and districts.
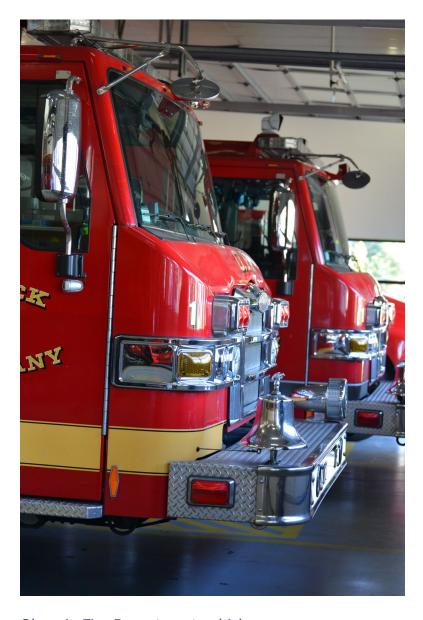
Our Vision for the Future:
A secure and resilient community where public safety services are delivered with professionalism and compassion for all.

Read more in the [Community Values and Vision chapter](#).

Introduction

Community safety requires forethought, earner trust and collaborative partnerships. The Olympia Police and Fire Departments have recently completed internal strategic plans designed to achieve those requisites and proactively ensure the City is not only in position to maintain public safety, but also enhance preparedness for evolving conditions and future emergencies. The Public Safety chapter of the Comprehensive Plan outlines the high level goals and policies that will guide action for both entities as well as those associated with the City's array of code enforcement responsibilities.

Fire Services Prevent Harm to People and Property

Olympia Fire Department vehicles.

The Olympia Fire Department (OFD) recruits, trains and retains highly capable professionals and provides them with the best available equipment and technology to protect the community and themselves. OFD is a core partner in the Thurston County Medic One System and other local and regional programs that seek to advance pre-emptive education, equity in service and reduce reliance on costly 911 emergency services. Additionally, the new CARES (Community Assistance, Referral and Education Services program) the Olympia Fire Department now provides services that will result in a healthier community and reduced reliance on the 911 Emergency system for non-acute concerns.

The department's approach to fire prevention and protection is in the [Fire Department Strategic Plan](#) ⧉ which identifies the challenges facing the City and recommends specific solutions.

The Department's core values include: stewardship, integrity, compassion and professionalism. The OFD mission is to respond rapidly, with highly training professionals to mitigate emergencies for our community. We are dedicated to reducing risk through prevention, fire and medical education, and disaster preparedness.

Olympia Fire personnel rendering assistance

Goals and Policies

GS1 The community has a high level of fire protection, emergency medical services equal to or exceeding the industry standard and community expectations.

PS1.1 Continue to manage fire protection functions, paramedic services, and City emergency services by planning, organizing, directing, and controlling the resources available.

PS1.2 Provide timely and effective response to emergency and non-emergency calls for service, and report performance levels to maintain community trust.

PS1.3 Continue to provide fire code enforcement in new construction and fire safety inspections of existing businesses to reduce loss of life and minimize damage from fires.

PS1.4 Ensure equipment and other assets are adequate in capacity to serve the safety needs of our evolving community.

PS1.5 Continue to provide paramedic and basic life support care to the City of Olympia, as part of the Thurston County Medic One System.

PS1.6 Upgrade the fire flow capacity of Olympia's water system where needed to meet current safety standards and accommodate any future annexations.

PS1.7 Conduct a comprehensive, inclusive community risk assessment and implement a risk reduction plan to ensure equitable service citywide.

GS2 The community proactively prepares for major disasters and is in position to quickly and successfully respond and recover to a wide range of emergency scenarios.

PS2.1 Coordinate the City's preparation, mitigation, response and recovery to disasters through an all-hazard Emergency Management program that includes planning for major catastrophic events.

PS2.2 Maintain role as a participating agency for post-disaster and pandemic recovery through the coordination of disaster cost recovery, and the facilitation of our community's short- and long-term recovery goals and objectives.

PS2.3 Educate community members on how to sustain their households without outside assistance for a minimum of 72 hours during an emergency event, and that some events, such as a severe earthquake, may require them to sustain themselves for five to ten days or more.

PS2.4 Work with partners to gather best available information on the impact a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake would have on the community, including the potential magnitude, impacts of vertical movements and tsunamis, and how OFD might best prepare and respond.

GS3 Maintain a well-trained, resilient, safe and sustainable organization.

PS3.1 Continue to provide a highly skilled and adequately staffed fire fighting force to respond to fire, medical, and all other hazards to protect life and property.

PS3.2 Continue to ensure services are aligned with industry and community standards.

PS3.3 Employ the most current for fire fighter safety, command practices, training and equipment maintenance.

PS3.4 Provide professional growth through development and opportunities for all employees.

PS3.5 Ensure strong retention by maintaining a positive organizational culture driven by shared values, employee recognition and transparency.

PS3.6 Reduce 911 emergency response volumes through proactive public education and community assistance referrals.

PS3.7 Continue to build on regional partnerships and seek alternative funding sources that helps reinforce and expand response capacities.

Police Services Promote Public Safety

Public safety is integral to overall community livability. People expect and deserve to live safely in their homes, just as they should enjoying community outings and amenities, without fear or any form of discrimination.

In Olympia, the Olympia Police Department (OPD) is the primary entity responsible for the law enforcement side of public safety. But the broader public safety system increasingly involves coordination with civilian liaisons, courts, restorative justice programs and many other actors. Over time, the City has also increased citizen oversight of law enforcement including expanded direct involvement of diverse community members, a broader scope of Civilian Police Auditor reviews, improved data sharing and transparency, and better community education on policing and oversight mechanisms.

OPD must continue to adapt to changing socioeconomic conditions as well as evolving state and federal laws. Great strides have been made to reduce use of force interactions through the adoption of best practices, and new civilian-based teams now implement some of the City's most impactful crime prevention and criminal diversion initiatives. Looking forward, OPD will continue to develop collaborative law enforcement response and prevention strategies that help ensure a safe community while also prioritizing equitable treatment and the importance of earning and maintaining community trust and partnership.

Goals and Policies

GS4 Police services are delivered in a manner consistent with the values of the community members of Olympia.

PS4.1 Deliver police services in a professional, timely, objective, and equitable manner.

PS4.2 Understand and respect the diversity of our community. Strive to reflect that diversity in the composition of the Police Department.

PS4.3 Interact respectfully with everyone in the community to earn their respect, using force only when needed. All levels of the agency must display the compassion, cordiality, and courtesy needed to help community members see themselves as allies of their police force.

PS4.4 Encourage a spirit of cooperation that balances the collective interests of all community members with the personal rights of individuals.

PS4.5 Maintain a departmental environment that is open, accessible, responsive, and seeks feedback in a way that is consistent with the values and priorities of the community.

PS4.6 Provide strong and effective responses to serious criminal behavior, and use discretion and alternative sanctions for minor offenses.

GS5 Community members are empowered as partners in identifying and solving community problems.

PS5.1 Develop and periodically update a comprehensive communications strategy to inform the community about crime trends, prevention and outcomes from high profile cases or events, and make it easily accessible to the public.

PS5.2 Share information and form strategic partnerships with individuals and groups in the community to proactively address emergent policing issues.

PS5.3 Involve and empower diverse community members as we look for innovative ways to prevent and reduce repeat

PS5.4 Emphasize the need for our police force to have positive, day-to-day interaction with the public that encourages collaboration on problem-solving, rather than responding only to crises. Regular contact between the police and community members helps strengthen working relationships and makes policing more effective.

PS5.5 Proactively coordinate with the Police Auditor, Community Oversight Board, Social Justice and Equity Commission and other partners to continually evaluate policing methods and outcomes and identify new best practices.

PS5.6 Enlist the support of other public agencies and community service groups to help solve policing problems, and to evaluate the effectiveness of police services.

PS5.7 Ensure regular communication and cooperation between the Police Department and other City departments, at both the managerial and line levels.

PS5.8 Maximize the City's efforts to recruit community volunteers and use them effectively.

PS5.9 Communicate with Olympia's diverse population to seek input on how best to meet their needs.

PS5.10 Communicate with the public on a regular basis to gain public understanding and consensus on the community's policing needs.

PS5.11 Seek opportunities to inform the public of Police Department programs and activities.

PS5.12 Communicate with the community and the media about incidents on a timely basis.

PS5.13 Provide open and accessible ways for the public to receive information about incidents.

PS5.14 Provide both police personnel and the public with clearly articulated Police Department values that provide a clear sense of the City's focus and direction.

PS5.15 Increase OPD visibility at events, in neighborhoods and in non-crisis situations.

GS6 The Police Department is sufficiently staffed and equipped to provide a high level of service for the community.

PS6.1 Periodically review and update staffing volume to ensure adequate coverage while allowing time for proactive community interactions.

PS6.2 Coordinate with TCOMM dispatch to develop alternative ways to respond to calls for service when sworn officers are not required. This will free-up more time for our officers to develop strategies for preventing crime in our community.

PS6.3 Whenever possible, make full use of non-sworn employees, volunteers, and referrals to other agencies so the City can respond to service requests cost-effectively.

PS6.4 Focus on the quality of service provided to community members with non-emergency calls, and not merely the speed of response.

PS6.5 Use satellite stations and regular patrol beats to improve community member access to, and interaction with, the Police Department.

PS6.6 Develop a real-time crime analysis center with regional partners, and use predictive analysis to better identify and address trends.

PS6.7 Measure the Department's level of service not by inputs (such as officers per capita), but by outcomes such as problems eliminated and community member satisfaction with the quality of officer interaction.

PS6.8 Regularly track how police workloads are generated and find ways to reduce them, or allocate work more efficiently, both in and outside the Police Department. External entities which generate police workload should share responsibility for providing ways to manage it.

PS6.9 Use technology to improve the City's efficiency at completing necessary but time-consuming activities, such as report filing, data management, communication, and administrative tasks.

PS6.10 Use data management technology to improve access to information, both for police personnel and community members.

PS6.11 Provide specialized police units, including traffic patrol, and services important to maintaining Olympia's quality of life.

GS7 The effectiveness of Olympia's police services is maximized by collaborating with other service providers.

PS7.1 Ensure continuous crisis intervention training for officers and collaborate with mental health professionals to address social rather than criminal problems.

PS7.2 Build good working relationships with other agencies and social service providers, identifying divisions of responsibility and ways to cooperate effectively.

PS7.3 Avoid using jails and the criminal justice system to address non-criminal social problems, whenever possible. Work with the courts to find alternatives to imprisonment, such as dispute resolution, substance abuse treatment, and other strategies that address underlying problems.

PS7.4 Take steps to improve cooperation and communication among police, prosecutors, defenders, judges, and corrections agencies. Work with them on process improvements that will improve the effectiveness of our criminal justice system.

PS7.5 Combine resources with other law enforcement agencies when a joint approach to law enforcement and crime prevention makes sense, such as central dispatch, drug enforcement, and SWAT teams.

PS7.6 Look for creative ways to build relationships with private security firms, Animal Control, and other organizations, so they can help extend the capability of our Police Department.

PS7.7 Build relationships with other police agencies to gain from their experiences and expertise.

PS7.8 Explore reinstating School Resource Officers at Olympia area schools.

> **GS8 OPD is a preferred employer due to the culture, opportunity for upward mobility and accountability.**

PS8.1 Ensure that Olympia's accountability system includes accessibility, integrity, legitimacy, learning, and reasonable cost.

PS8.2 Ensure that Olympia's accountability system meets the interests of the City Council, City Manager, Police Department management, affected labor unions and the community in collaboratively providing accountability and support systems (like training, counseling, and feedback) that meet the policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

PS8.3 Continue to build a well-trained, diverse team of officers and non-commissioned staff.

PS8.4 Provide training and opportunities that maintain employee safety and enthusiasm while also bolstering workforce retention.

PS8.5 Maintain strong internal communications and engagement to support a culture of trust, knowledge and accountability.

Code Enforcement Preserves Community Livability

Code Enforcement is a City program that allows community members and others to report violations of city code relating to health, safety, and welfare on private property. The Code Enforcement program investigates and seeks to remedy a variety of safety and livability including complaints about noise, trash, graffiti, signs, abandoned vehicles, animal control, overgrown noxious weeds, dangerous buildings, unlawful encampments and other community safety and livability concerns. Code Enforcement collaborates with Olympia's Police, Fire, Public Works, Building, and Legal Departments to resolve cases, and coordinates with other community entities on education and prevention activities.

Goals and Policies

> **GS9 The City seeks to proactively resolve code offences.**

PS9.1 Seek compliance first and penalties only when necessary.

PS9.2 Reduce the amount of time allowed to achieve compliance by offering technical assistance and referrals to resources.

PS9.3 Educate neighborhoods about code enforcement and other City services, and how they can best interact with them.

PS9.4 Communicate regularly with neighborhood organizations.

> **GS10 Complaints and resolutions are tracked and reported consistently.**

PS10.1 Provide community members who submit complaints with timely information on current code enforcement activities.

PS10.2 Monitor and regularly report on how the program's enforcement practices are working, so they can be improved or refined, if needed.

PS10.3 Communicate with those who submit complaints and alleged violators in a predictable and timely manner.

This page intentionally blank