



OLYMPIA

Natural Environment

2045

Community Engagement Summary



Why a Comprehensive Plan?

Comprehensive Planning Helps Us...

Use limited resources efficiently and equitably

- Set goals and “high-level” policies
- Plan investments
- Set annual work plans

Address the needs of existing and future Olympians

Olympia 2045 Chapters



Olympia 2045 Chapters

"The Natural Environment chapter addresses the many benefits we receive from a thriving natural environment and the ways we can work together to keep it healthy."



Natural Environment

From community-based habitat stewardship opportunities to regulations protecting critical areas from the impacts of development, the goals and policies outlined in this chapter aim to promote both human well-being and environmental health."



Natural Environment Chapter Public Participation

(April 2023 – June 2024)

- Outreach to environmental organizations & the Tribe
- Public meetings & events
- Comment forms & staff contacts
- Online survey
- Social Justice & Equity Commission
- Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee
- Utility Advisory Committee
- Planning Commission
- City Council – Land Use & Environment Subcommittee

Natural Environment Priorities

Survey results – Prioritization of Environmental Topics



<div>↑</div> <div>Highest Priority</div> <div>Lowest Priority</div> <div>↓</div>	How do you feel the City should prioritize the following areas over the next 10-20 years? (1 = most important, 8 = least important)		
		Average Rank	Definition
	Habitat Stewardship	3.2	Ongoing ecosystem restoration in forests, wetlands, riparian areas/streams on City-owned undeveloped natural areas
	Urban Forestry	3.7	Tree protection, planting and maintenance in urban, developed settings
	Capital Projects	3.7	Large scale investments such as shoreline restoration, toxic/brownfield/encampment cleanups, fish passage, or land acquisition for habitat protection/conservation
	Green Infrastructure/Low Impact Development	4.0	Investing in nature-based solutions for development, transportation, and other projects to manage stormwater, address impacts of climate change, and enhance wildlife habitat
	Stormwater Management	4.8	Flood control and water quality improvement in local streams and Budd Inlet
	Agriculture & Food Sovereignty	5.0	Allocation of land, resources, and technical support toward promoting edible landscapes, community gardens, and related education
	Policy and Regulations	5.5	Strengthening or loosening municipal code and other regulatory policies and enforcement practices
	Education, Outreach, Engagement	6.0	Providing information and technical support to community members, business owners, youth, and others whose actions impact Olympia's natural environment

Natural Environment Priorities



What We Heard - Examples:

“**Keep native and mature trees** wherever possible. Modify infrastructure (and code requirements) to accommodate mature trees instead of cutting them down.”

“**My family values green spaces...** neighborhood parks are a place we visit daily, that bring great peace and quiet to our lives and allow us to appreciate the beauty of the wildlife that live there. Prioritizing/keeping those green spaces is my #1”

“Make Oly a walkable city. **Decrease auto traffic** and increase bike paths.”

“I would like to emphasize giving **native populations agency and resources to steward the land** who have deep ties and have been working on these issues for decades.”

“Our priority needs to be **Low Impact Development** wherever possible.”

“**Climate change** is my #1 concern.”



Natural Environment Priorities



What We Heard – Topics that most frequently came up:

- Access to healthy parks and greenspaces w/well-maintained trails
- Impact of encampments on natural areas and water bodies
- Pollution (including noise and light), water quality, clean air
- Protect and expand tree canopy
- Impact of sprawl: development, construction, transportation systems
- Climate change, particularly sea-level rise, urban heat islands, and water conservation
- Healthy habitat for wildlife populations



Survey Results

Are there other "natural environment" topics not listed (in the survey) that you think should be prioritized?



Keep native and mature trees wherever possible. Modify infrastructure to accommodate mature trees instead of cutting them down.

Establish more "Urban Natural (or Quiet) Areas" with limited access. To be used for nature study and quiet relaxation. Trails would be narrow, dirt (not asphalt), and for walkers only. Watershed Park is a wonderful example. Another is the dirt trail (not the road) at Woodard Bay.

Air Quality is important. Reduce emissions from gas and diesel vehicles and visiting ships.

More parks without play equipment but with chairs, bench's, tables

I think more trails should be a priority.

The direct health of human beings

Appreciation of how blessed we are to have an environment worth sacrificing for.

All of the above are important, priority rankings are very close.

Abolish parking minimums.

Limiting sprawl from carless development of low density development. Work with the country/bordering cities to limit growth outside of cities.

availability of clean water for drinking. It seems we have plenty of water, but that may not continue to be the case as water availability remains constant and population grows. Water conservation is critical.

Not to take the place of any of these but I would like to see more attention and awareness given to noise and light pollution. They aren't top of mind all the time but they really hurt the world.

Working with Intercity Transit to provide more services: expanding length of transport day from downtown, more frequent trips through neighborhoods (maybe in smaller vans), and better education about these options. I bike, walk, use a car, and public transport, but would do more of the latter if it were even more convenient.

climate change

i would not have gone 1 to 8 had I been allowed to say what the first priorities in my mind/experience were

Homeless population destroying natural habitats need to be dealt with.

We need a 125 year water plan. Bellevue is doing that.

Cleanup and restore the nearshore.

General upkeep/cleaning/trash removal - especially in downtown parks/Capitol Lake

Survey Results

Are there other "natural environment" topics not listed that you think should be prioritized? (Continued)



Fresh water and salt water cleanliness for water play and swimming

Ecosystem services, but this may fall under Capital Projects

Ensure that neighborhoods are livable. Maintain tree canopy as well as habitat. Also consider lighting and noise. Consider the impact of too many cars esp with lack of parking and too much reliance on density of housing. The city needs to work with the county.

Restoring the health of Budd Inlet. Current programs are at best band-aids; they are not working and won't work to restore Budd Inlet's health

Invasive species management could be important - in particular, the invasion of forests by Holly trees. Also, with recent large wildfires, I would encourage the City to work on fire-proofing buildings and communities - the new film "Elemental" does a great job of explaining how forest thinning won't prevent fires, but there are good ways to protect our structures moving forward.

bike lanes and passenger ferry to Seattle and Tacoma

It's hard to prioritize. They're all important

water availability

Green transportation - making bike lanes more accessible and safer. They should be larger, prioritized, and with a barrier to protect them from traffic.

Additionally, there should just be more bike paths.

Please plan to "daylight" Moxlie Creek to restore it as an urban amenity, adopt policies to reduce impervious ground covers (streets, parking lots, etc).

Make green spaces a part of dense urban development.

wildlife habitat preservation

Emphasis on land back initiatives, returning stewardship to Squaxin peoples

Regulations should be strengthened! Last item "strengthening or loosening" is a goofy question. People with the opposite opinion would give the same answer #1

I think that developers - who appear to be reaping the bounty in Thurston County right now - should be held to higher standards.

public access (trails, parks) to green spaces and shorelines - for all neighborhoods

We need to evaluate and change shoreline designations to help prevent urban sprawl. It is important to consider how our actions affect the environment as a whole and not just the environment within the confines of our municipality. Our priority needs to be facilitating low impact development wherever possible to build up and not out.

requiring more green space and protected green areas in new developments.

Olympia should look to urban forestry models such as Cecil Konijnendijk van den Bosch's 3-30-300 rule for healthier, more climate resilient cities.

Survey Results

What do you value most about Olympia's natural environment?



Mature native trees. Pockets of natural forest and wetland.

The City's policies and concerned citizens seem to work toward keeping as much of the City's natural beauty as possible. This attitude is as important as the natural beauty, because without it the beauty could easily be sacrificed to development.

I value living animals and plants in our environment.

Trees, the Capitol Campus, Capitol Lake (or estuary)

Large trees, prairies, open spaces, trails.

The abundance of water

Green space, ecosystem services, access to trails, waterfront, and forest in and near neighborhoods

Places off limit to cars.

Waterways/tree canopy.

Access to urban parks and preserved natural areas

Plenty of green in most areas including park spaces.

Temperate rainforest, we're so close to the Olympic Peninsula, the water (especially rain). It's obvious everywhere you look although some people are trying hard to block it out.

The beauty of the sound and mountains. Our lovely parks and trails.

clean air and water

Mix of urban, green spaces, water views

The beauty, and the ability to access it. I am an avid photographer and so I constantly am in the surrounding nature of Olympia. I would always like to maintain the ability to have easy and public access to the surrounding parks and trails, while also making sure those who litter or don't respect the land are dealt with properly.

Trees, more trees

the beauty, the resources, the chance to interact with nature without ANY toxins that is sustainable both for recreation and food (like fishing....where do we fish in Olympia, for instance?) both aquatic and land based.

Survey Results

What do you value most about Olympia's natural environment? (Con't)



Greenery, trails & waterfront

Maintain open and agricultural areas. Promote local agricultural and residential ownership.

Budd Inlet

The mix of both natural and urban landscape settings The urban, working (port) and natural shorelines that provide walking trail and shoreline access. The neighborhood connection trails through natural area (i.e. watershed park & Garfield nature trail). natural parks and urban opens spaces such Squaxin park, the capital campus that provide green areas to offset heat island effect as well as areas to walk and take a mental moment.

Olympia has become more and more populated and congested since I moved here 30 years ago. Every green space that is saved enhances my quality of life here.

The plenitude and so many water views

My family really values the green spaces in established neighborhoods. Similar to how San Francisco Street Bakery is a neighborhood hub, the neighborhood parks are a place we visit daily, that bring great peace and quiet to our lives and allow us to appreciate the beauty of the wildlife that live there.

Prioritizing/keeping those green spaces is my #1 on a below the 30,000 feet level.

Hiking access and water access

Our wetlands

How much access we have to nature

Parks, clean air.

Puget sound and parks and trails around it

The beauty

That we still have it.

We're unique that we get the trees, mountains, and Puget Sound

Livability

Our four large natural area parks

Access to wild lands, green spaces, parks (including dog parks), and urban trees. I appreciate clean air, clean water, healthy forests, quiet and dark skies.

parks and estuaries

Clean water and forests

lots of walking places and natural spaces sprinkled everywhere

Clean air and water.

Survey Results

What do you value most about Olympia's natural environment? (Con't)



Keeping a larger number of parks, forests, and wetlands for habitat and limited recreational use.
The tree cover and access to shorelines, parks.
Trees, wildlife, water.
Reducing heat islands through tree and open space management. Allowing flexibility in development that considers environmental factors and improvements.
The views, the access to trails, parks. Birdwatching, the salmon returning. The frogs in the ponds by LOTT and the Children's museum.(there were so many more before the apartments were built)
I love the diversity of forest and waterways including streams, rivers, and inlets. I love the lush green and ability to be lost in old growth forest.
plentiful & varied tree cover
Going for a walk in woods near my home. Air clear enough to see Mt. Rainier.
Uncongested open space; trees, water - being more of a natural environment and less of an urban jungle.
i appreciate the foresight of planners who set aside parcels such as squaxin park for the benefit of future generations.
I like the trails and parks. But you have to keep the homeless out.
lots of undeveloped green spaces and wildlife
I appreciate forested areas and access to water.
Access and recreation with our shorelines, which needs to be enhanced. Especially on the west side of bud inlet and the future Deschutes River estuary.
Urban forests
There is a lot of it. Keep it green and treed. Need more natural barriers between any new developments and existing structures and communities.
My wife routinely comments, "We live in a magical fairy forest." Olympia's urban forest is a special place and gateway to the many natural wonders of the Pacific Northwest, but growing and maintaining Olympia's urban forest must be done with intention. It won't be good by accident.
Urban forestry and protecting the trees/reforestation in the urban corridor.

Survey Results

What are your greatest concerns about Olympia's natural environment?



We are losing our mature trees just when we need them the most for climate mitigation and adaptation. If we have tree protection areas in a tree plan then they need to be truly protected and restored if trees die.

My greatest concern is that the pressure to grow and develop will be too great and the City's environment, parks, and natural areas will be sacrificed to developers.

Water quality for fresh and salt water needs attention from the City and other entities. This includes the Port.

Pollution at the lake and the bay, waterfront. Too many ugly new apartment buildings with no or little vegetation, flowers, bushes, trees around them. We need to emphasize these plants in the downtown area

Developments that take away trees. Invasive plants like Ivy and Scot's Broom

That it will be poorly managed by people working from a climate justice and equity framework

Sprawl, impervious surface expansion, pollution, inequitable access

Overreliance on private automotive travel and its attendant environmental and societal blight.

Destroying our tree canopy & overall natural environment to single family homes.

Climate change, pollution, population growth

In the much needed areas of high density, how to keep green areas. Park space needs to be included, even if very small spaces.

In a word, sprawl. The bulldozers keep knocking down forests to pave for huge homes so people can drive hours in huge trucks to buy sugar and plastic crap. I believe that we can have a dense city that is green too. Buildings with trees in between them.

Extreme growth without public transportation to support it. I support dense urban housing, but those folks shouldn't need a car to visit Squaxin or Burfoot Park, or to get from Evergreen late at night. The McMansions built in the suburbs should be paying for the extra energy they require, the runoff they create, etc.

wildfire and smoke

Too much construction that does not solve the housing crisis.

Cleanliness

Survey Results

What are your greatest concerns about Olympia's natural environment? (Con't)



that we will give in to predatory corporate practices

Homeless population

We're selling our future to non-local entities

Dioxin contamination on the Port Peninsula. Loss of estuarine habitat. Loss of species of birds and fish.

Agriculture, local sourced, and food sovereignty should be addressed as a rural element in the county with input from the urban populations.

If in the urban area, the scale of "urban agriculture" should be accessory to the residential use or as a community garden to provide opportunity for physical and mental therapy and not at a scale that would replace natural areas or areas needed for urban density development so we do not cause further sprawl into the rural resource lands.

My greatest concern is that Olympia's natural environment is disappearing quickly!

Pollution, Trash, dwindling habitat for wildlife

My biggest concern is that Olympia will prioritize development over keeping/maintaining green spaces. I know we have a housing shortage and I support building up in already busy areas or subsidizing homeowners to put in ADUs or allow for tiny homes to park on their extra land. The last thing I want is for our peaceful green spaces to be developed/ripped away for the ugly/crammed in developer mazes.

Not being able to safely get in natural water areas like lake and sound

Encampments

Uncontrolled growth and development. The more trees cut down and land that is cleared for development equals more pollution, possible future water shortages, congestion, etc.

Loss of trees we need to help with climate impacts

Sea level rise/ floods

Drought and fires

Over development without strict environmental standards

Rising sea levels, flooding in downtown

Development and pollution

Over development, lack of regard for environmental regulations and over reliance on density of housing-directly conflicts with environment

Loss of the natural environment due to man made development

We're losing it. Especially in allowing development too close to water bodies.

Survey Results

What are your greatest concerns about Olympia's natural environment? (Con't)



Water pollution due to storm-water runoff is one of the most damaging to salmon, and also one of the most challenging to control. It would be fantastic if we developed a plan to capture and treat storm-water runoff before it is released into streams, rivers, and the sound. I am also concerned about the plans to pump treated wastewater back into our aquifers (because so many chemicals cannot be removed, things like pharmaceuticals, nutrients, and hormones)

you have to drive everywhere. our bike infrastructure is unsafe and no one feels safe riding bikes

Poisoning of the water and over development replacing trees

landslides and erosion with steep slopes next to water

Promote carbon sequestration.

Olympia's climate resilience and how all these companies are buying land to put in these strip malls and unnecessary stores to buy things. We need more affordable apartments that prioritize green spaces, not more places to shop.

Loss of tree cover/stress to vegetation and wildlife, increase in impervious surfaces, invasive species, litter and graffiti

The impact our dependency on cars is having on our quality of life.

It's being overrun and ruined by outdoor "urban camping" with all that entails

The extremes in weather are most concerning, prolonged, hot, dry summers and bigger storm systems causing havoc to infrastructure and endangering our community to wildfire. Hot streams decimating salmon population

incremental loss of open spaces

Densification of development without imposing higher impact fees to help offset the impacts on walking safety, cycling safety, library capacity, jail capacity, and other things that Issaquah collects impact and mitigation fees for, but Olympia does not.

Ruination due to overpopulation and overbuilding; we can't sustain the incoming numbers of people without sacrificing what makes Olympia beautiful.

unfettered over-development and overuse of existing facilities leading to degradation.

Construction that does not take trees and green spaces into account. There seems to be a cut them all, build, plant puny trees mentality. Homeless living, trashing, polluting without a care in the world and no repercussions. Olympia is not enforcing regulations in place with the homeless population.

climate change impacts on native plants and animals

Percival Landing is one of Olympia's main attractions, but it is only about half a mile long with a handful of businesses. The boardwalk allows for the public to access and engage with our best natural resource, our shoreline and businesses like the Oly Tap room keep this particular waterfront area bustling. Our town needs an energy facelift and public interaction with the shoreline seems to brighten Olympia. My greatest concern is that we don't maximize our shorelines in the public's interest, current shoreline designations would prevent the expansion of "Percival Landing type" development along Olympia's western shoreline.

That we will lose it to large multi-family developments.

Climate change will force re-configuration of the urban forest. We must devote resources to make that re-configuration a good one.

Survey Results

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?



The city needs to regulate residents and HOAs that always want to cut trees first instead of finding solutions that keep trees and infrastructure. The city needs a tree canopy goal and requirement. The current minimal tree unit requirements are totally inadequate. Developers must be required to keep and protect a certain percentage of each acre in tree canopy, not be allowed to clearcut everything and plant a few small trees per lot along the street.

I appreciate your willingness to receive citizen input. I trust you will listen and act on it.

We should acquire important pieces of land for parks and open spaces before it is completely gone. Access to nature is an aspect of quality of life. We should not pave over every inch of the city area.

I'd like to see two trails built in the future. One a trail along Budd Bay from downtown to Squaxin Park. It would be a walking and bike trail. Private Property would have to be crossed. Two, another trail along the south boundary of Squaxin Park from Boston Harbor Road along the south boundary to the east boundary and along the creek.

Without an objective meritocratic framework guiding the city and with the city government adopting a DEI framework, there will be no meaningful solution to the problems Olympia faces outside of the disruption and dismantling of structures and systems that provide the stability people rely on.

Olympia must tackle its extreme private automobile dependency problem before meaningful environmental and social change can take place.

It was hard to rank! They all seem important.

Thanks for this work! Nature is what will save us if we only make it our friend and stop weakening it.

Prioritizing and supporting green building practices, like graywater ponds should exist. We have the first wastewater system approved by the city, but we have no financial benefit even though all the water that comes off our roof goes through filtration in our yard, rather than through the sewer system. If homeowners aren't committed to these ideas, they won't do them without incentives.

Make sure current and future trails are maintained and safe.

I recently moved here and would like to do all I can as a citizen to maintain the natural environment around Olympia and the south sound. I would love to continue receiving emails and questionnaires about the environment so I we can always provide input.

Because it is the capital of the state, I really think we should make an all out effort to model beauty and sustainability to the rest of the state.

I feel as though making plans really is useless while ignoring the destruction caused by our homeless. There needs to be consequences like choosing drug rehab, mental health help or jail. Bringing them resources is a waste of time and money when they continually abuse the system. Law enforcement needs more power in these matters too.

Olympia should, like many other cities, recognize the benefits of structural improvements in urban watersheds

I appreciate that Olympia's taxpayers are willing to pay more in taxes when needed to preserve natural environment. That money should be used effectively as the taxpayers wished and never used to cover other budget shortages.

Thank you for keeping the community involved. :)

Olympia needs more swimming access

I rated regulations low because you included loosening them. We need them to have stronger environmental protections!

Stop catering to developers

Survey Results

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us? (Con't)



Climate change is my number 1 concern.

I have little hope that we will act forcefully enough to do much good. Just too expensive.

Thank you for doing this work and for giving the public an opportunity to contribute.

please put our natural environment first and foremost. convert westbay waterfront to a park for all to enjoy and remove the 5th street dam to restore our estuary and demolish the old brewery and make a park.

Olympia should partner regionally to protect water and forests and agricultural land

Make Oly a walkable city. Decrease auto traffic and increase bike paths and walking.

Olympia should be doing more outreach to millennials and Gen Z off of Instagram and Reddit. They want to participate but it's not always easy to keep up with community projects, events and legislature unless you go looking deep for it.

This element of the plan should cross over to the transportation element to stop support for widening streets/encourage more driving; support for transit, bicycle lanes, sidewalks.

Again, daylight Moxlie Creek to improve salmon habitat and add an urban amenity to downtown.

Thank you for thinking about the big picture in development and not just the bottom line for developers.

Some generally applicable regulatory measures are burdensome and more discretion should be used when considering individual development projects.

Like the idea of promoting urban farming. Maybe keep some of the u-pick area at the new park that was once Spooners? And/or keep the berry stand as part of the park. Utilize more clover lawns in the parks. less chemicals and water usage. switch gas blowers and mowers to electric as possible.

Again, would like to emphasize giving native populations agency and resources to steward the land who have deep ties and have been working on these issues for decades.

highly important to be looking at long-term trends (both natural e.g. global warming, sea level rise) and directly man-made (automobile prevalence & privilege)

The lack of enforcement of federal water law during consideration of shoreline development is a serious problem. Olympia should be passing many of these applications to the Corps of Engineers for review and approval or denial. Example: West Bay Yards should be a federal application, not a local land use application.

There also needs to be action taken with respect to the homeless populations defecating in and polluting natural areas, cutting wood for fires, and building fires along roadsides.

We must stop supporting the homeless. they are ruining everything.

Maybe look into creating a city ordinance encouraging our vast quantity of parking lots to convert into multi use structures: business, parking, apartments, trees or green spaces.

The current zoning/shoreline designation of Deschutes parkway area does not do this area justice. It is best suited for recreational activities, and enterprises that attract the public to the shoreline, such as cafes, restaurants, bars and retail. Many of the previous environmental studies of this land did not account for the current situation. The needles in the soil have created a hazard that needs to be removed. The only feasible solution to remove these hazards is to remove the top layer of soil. This means that impacts to environmentally sensitive areas are unavoidable... Unless we decide that leaving thousands of needles in the soil for kids to dig up someday is a viable option. If we agree that the needles need to be removed this will open a window of opportunity to restore the value of these wetlands in a means that is best for the community. These wetland buffers can be restored to ensure better than no net loss and actual increasing of wetland square footage. We would consolidate the wetlands on the southern part of the property during restoration, allowing for significant building footprint for shoreline preferred and dependent development on the north side of the property.

No. Thank you for your time.

New requirements from the State
Legislature

Interdepartmental staff input

Community input

Proposed Updates at a Glance:

- Develop an **Urban Forest Management Plan** to guide policy and set tree canopy goals
- Integrate **climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience** strategies into environmental planning and implementation
- Ensure that the many benefits and opportunities of the City's habitat stewardship work **reach all Olympia's communities equitably**
- Establish sustainable **workforce development** programming to create more pathways into "green" careers
- Incorporate **Indigenous knowledge and stewardship practices**, cultural connections to the land, and outcomes related to Tribal treaty rights



New requirements from the State
Legislature

Interdepartmental staff input

Community input

Proposed Updates at a Glance:

- Create a roadway stormwater infrastructure retrofit prioritization for water quality treatment for **protection of salmon** and other aquatic species
- Identify opportunities to locate multi-benefit '**stormwater park**' natural water quality treatment alternatives on Parks and other City properties
- **Capitol Lake Estuary Restoration** Project – Remain engaged as a key stakeholder through future phases of planning and implementation
- Explore feasibility and design alternatives for **fish passage** barrier removal of key salmon-bearing streams





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Download & read the Comprehensive Plan
Find other opportunities to provide input

