

Economy



An employee at Olympia local business, Olykraut.

What Olympia Values:

Olympians recognize the value of a healthy economy that is stable and sustainable. The health and welfare of the community depends upon there being a range of employment opportunities so that we are not dependent on just one sector for our economic welfare. Local businesses should have access to quality infrastructure so that they have what they need in order to engage in commerce. Community Members should have access to a broad range of locally produced goods and services so that they can be assured that their money is spent in ways that sustain our community. Our community should continue to be an active center for arts and recreation—and grow and foster their development. Education and health care are also critical to a stable and sustainable economy—our community is graced with several premier institutions in each of these sectors and we collaborate with them on projects of mutual benefit. Olympians value a diverse and inclusive economy that offers a variety of education, employment, and business opportunities accessible to all. We take pride in our status as Washington State’s Capital, our local businesses, unique places and spaces, and the creative spirit of our community.

Our Vision for the Future:

Olympia’s economy is diverse and balanced.—Family wage jobs and career opportunities are available to our community members from multiple sectors, including government and manufacturing, health care, education, and service sector employment.—A significant and ever increasing amount of our goods, services and food is locally sourced.—We emphasize sustainable business practices and environmentally friendly development.

Every Olympian is afforded quality lifelong opportunities that build pathways to upward mobility and financial stability. Olympia is a safe, resilient, and welcoming city with abundant community character, making our city a choice place to live and a destination for visitors.

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

[Collaboration with the Squaxin Island Tribe](#)

Early in the planning process, the Squaxin Island Tribe indicated to the City which chapters are of most interest to the Tribe. This chapter represents specific priorities for the Tribe, and as such we sought their consultation and collaboration on its content, as envisioned in the Accord between both governmental entities. Any future amendments to this chapter should include continued collaboration with the Tribe.

Introduction

The strength of Olympia's economy is what determines whether we are able to pay for the public services that help to make our community a great place to live. A diverse and healthy economy provides a reliable tax base that generates revenues sufficient to keep pace with inflation. The quality of the community is the most powerful economic engine we have for attracting and maintaining high quality job opportunities.

We have been told by Olympians they value an economy where:

- There are plentiful living wage jobs.
- Consumers and the City support local entrepreneurs.
- Residents and businesses want many of their goods and services to come from local sources.
- A highly educated workforce, entrepreneurial spirit and culture of innovation energize our economy.
- Art projects, art events, and support for the arts are integral to the community and its economy.

A healthy economy must provide jobs that pay a living wage, usually defined as a wage that allows a household to meet its basic needs without the need for public assistance. The level of a living wage will vary based on the size and makeup of the household.

See the links in the "For More Information" section at the end of this chapter for more information about what constitutes a living wage in our community, cost burdened households and middle income housing affordability.

Olympia's Economic Profile

Cities play a critical role in supporting local economic activity. Without municipal services, economic activity and development is simply not possible. In turn the commerce that takes place in our community is responsible for much of the revenue that the City receives by way of taxes and fees that are used to help to support our quality of life. In the economic development

~~arena, Olympia has the following roles:~~

- ~~• Using its land use authority to provide places for businesses to locate.~~
- ~~• Maintaining an efficient, fair, transparent, and predictable permitting process that reduces business cost and timeline uncertainties.~~
- ~~• Collaborating with other public and private entities that have a more direct role in economic development, such as ports, business associations, and economic development associations.~~
- ~~• Developing and maintaining the infrastructure healthy businesses and neighborhoods need.~~
- ~~• Investing in traditional infrastructure, such as roads, sewer and water service, as well as in schools, parks, arts, and the natural environment.~~
- ~~• Commissioning reports, such as the "2013 Investment Strategy: Olympia's Opportunity Areas" and the Downtown Olympia "Community Renewal Area Feasibility Study," to provide information for the community to make informed decisions about its economic future.~~

~~Olympia's Three Top Employers:~~

~~Government:~~

~~Olympia is the capital of Washington and seat of Thurston County. The State, County, and City provide many local jobs. Government was the largest employer in Thurston County in 2010, contributing nearly 36,000 jobs. The Olympia School District is one of the largest single employers within the City. Many of these government jobs are tied to our more diverse, statewide economy, which helps to shield our community from economic swings. However, fluctuations in state government affect our local economy.~~

~~Given that our state's population is projected to grow significantly, it is very likely that employment with the state of Washington will continue to contribute in a positive way to our local economy in the long term. State employment helps to sustain our skilled and well educated workforce, which in turn provides an attractive labor force for private sector companies to draw from as they make decisions about where to locate.~~

~~The state has also been moving away from leasing private space to house its employees. A new 200,000 square foot office building is in the planning stages for the Capital Campus block located at the northwest corner of Capitol Way and 11th Avenue. This will likely mean that there will continue to be an excess of office space available for rent in the greater Olympia area. Other issues like school funding mandates may also impact the size of the State's workforce and its leasing practices.~~

~~The Investment Strategies report calls out that almost a third of state government employees statewide (32%) are over 55 years of age. As these employees retire over the next decade, many of those positions will likely be filled with younger employees. This trend could impact the demand for residential housing within Thurston County,~~

~~regardless of the overall size of state government. A younger state workforce could likely lead to a higher demand for multifamily housing that is supported by transit. Data from the Thurston Regional Planning Council's Sustainable Thurston report suggests that the "millennial" generation prefers urban multifamily housing options over suburban life styles. The changing demographics of Olympia's workforce will impact the City in several ways. There will likely be a demand for more downtown multifamily housing as millennials seek housing near their place of employment. Also, a retiring workforce will likely lead to the need and interest in more downtown multifamily housing, senior services and senior-oriented activities. These changes provide opportunities for quality growth in our future.~~
Olympia is fortunate to have a strong and stable economy with quality job, education, and business opportunities available to residents. However, not all community members have financial security and too many are living paycheck to paycheck.

Olympians value an inclusive economy where all people have access to resources and opportunities for upward mobility and financial stability. While most residents have incomes sufficient to meet basic needs and then invest in other life pursuits, a growing number of households are falling behind and vulnerable to economic or financial disruption. For this reason, an essential focus for Olympia's economic development efforts is to create pathways that elevate more residents of all backgrounds and abilities into economic security.

The City of Olympia doesn't do economic development on our own. This is work we do in collaboration with regional entities from a variety of fields and sectors, including government, business, education, workforce, non-profits, the private sector and others.

The overall purpose of economic development is to improve the quality of life for people. Through partnerships, programs, and investments the City aims to help residents, businesses, and our whole community thrive. Our efforts fall into four main themes:

- 1) **Education and Workforce Pathways:** Fostering a variety of education and career training opportunities to ensure individuals have the skills necessary to access in demand and well-paying jobs.
- 2) **Housing and Sense of Security:** Facilitating affordable housing initiatives to alleviate the burden on low- and moderate-income families and provide them with stable living conditions. (See the Housing Chapter for more on this)
- 3) **Business Enterprise Resources and Support:** Fostering entrepreneurship and supporting small businesses to create inclusivenew avenues for wealth creation, reduce reliance on goods and services from outside the community, and bolster the tax base we rely on to fund community goals and needs.

4) Community Lovability, Pride, and Resiliency: Investing in programs and projects that make Olympia a desirable destination to work, live, and play; and bolster our ability to respond effectively to physical and financial challenges.

Olympia's economy has become more diverse over the previous decade, moving from a significant reliance on government employment, to growth in other sectors, such as info-tech, healthcare, and professional services .

Long-term trends bring challenges and opportunities

As we plan for the future, we need to keep these long-term trends in mind.

Employment Growth:

Olympia is an employment center for Thurston County. During the work week, our population doubles in size as people enter Olympia for work. Based on Thurston Regional Planning Council data, between 2025 and 2045 we can expect a nearly 35% increase in the number of jobs located in Olympia between 2025 and 2045 (20,370 new jobs projected).

Top employment industries include public administration (state and local government), health care, professional services, retail trade, and accommodation and food service.

Olympia's status as the State capital means we can expect a large, stable base of government employment. At the same time, trends point to faster employment growth in the private sector industry, specifically the health care industry, which is our fastest growing industry sector. This brings important benefits. It produces a more diversified portfolio good mix of local jobs which helps balance market "ups and downs." In addition, a healthy tax base is key to providing the consistent services that we desire and expect in this community. An essential strategy, and one that Olympians generally support, is attracting and growing "headquarters" for businesses that provide environmentally friendly products while also paying family wages.

Looking ahead there are ample opportunities to grow more high paying jobs that could lift more Olympians into economic security. And not all these jobs will require a college degree. In Washington, about two-thirds of all jobs will require a certificate, associate degree, or higher.

However, Olympia possesses very little industrial zoning to accommodate advanced manufacturing or other large employers. High wage employment within City limits will likely be focused within info-tech, healthcare, and professional services sectors in addition to government.

Housing Instability

Renters and homeowners experience economic challenges in vastly different ways. Homeowners, even if they are still paying a mortgage, have seen incredible growth in home value over time. In a pinch, they can tap the equity they've built up. Conversely, renters are challenged by rapidly increasing costs, fewer available units, and home purchase market competition from non-local buyers and corporations. To many, home ownership feels completely out of reach. For too many of us, the costs of housing, utilities, and food are increasing at a pace faster than wages. This means it is more and more difficult to meet our own needs and reach or sustain financial security. Roughly one-third of us struggle to make ends meet and are living paycheck to paycheck.

Challenges to Upward Mobility

Social service and education partners stress the importance of reaching children earlier to ensure they know what career options and resources are available to them. Many are unable to imagine what's possible, let alone understand that there are systems in place to support them. On a second front, many workers have limited options for moving up or increasing income. Notably, many of these work in occupations that were temporarily displaced or had hours reduced during the pandemic, including childcare, food service, and personal services. There is also some risk that advances in automation and artificial intelligence in general will lead to the displacement of even more traditional jobs. All of this is in addition to the systemic barriers that make it most difficult to prosper for those facing generational poverty, racism, or discrimination.

City Expenses Growing Faster Than City Revenues

Although the City's tax base remained relatively strong through the pandemic, forecasts indicate expenditures might exceed revenue within a few years without policy or administrative adjustments. Stable revenue is critical to ensuring essential services. New revenue sources will need to be identified, or levels of service reduced.

Industry Change, Supply Chain and Labor Challenges

On the business front, resiliency is being tested not only by the increasing cost of goods, but also labor and disruptions to the supply chain, which has been slow to correct following pandemic shutdowns. Some are also facing transformative shake-ups. Examples include more households are ordering food delivery, more consumers are purchasing electric vehicles, and more many workers are migrating to employers who offer work from home options, to name a few examples. It is imperative that the private and public sectors engage one another to ensure support systems and proactive policies and investments will facilitate a successful transition into the future.

Advancing equity and helping people overcome hardship

Olympia is committed to advancing a community that is just and equitable for all. Our economic policies aim to reduce economic barriers and expand opportunities for all community members, with emphasis on Black, Indigenous, people of color, LGBTQ+, disabled, and low-income communities.

We recognize there are fundamental inequities in our economy. Low-income and renter households—disproportionately households—disproportionately Black, Hispanic, immigrant, and those including at least one person with a disability—face disability—face persistent economic challenges, which for some is compounded by systemic racism and discrimination. Data also shows us that single-parent households, immigrants, and people with disabilities especially have a harder time accessing the labor force.

Our economic development actions seek to advance equity in our economy and help so a wider range of people can achieve financial stability. Our policies and actions will help achieve this by leveraging community partner resources, directly engaging youth and dislocated workers to broaden career pathway options, continuing to facilitate greater housing security, and investing in diverse small business startups and local enterprise growth.

Advancing climate solutions

Climate change will affect our national and local economy in several ways, creating both risk and opportunity.

Climate studies indicate we can expect to see more frequent heat waves, storms and flooding, which will heighten the potential for property damage, personal and business financial stress, and global resource scarcity. These factors may cause greater stress demands on the City's budget for sea level rise adaptation and other climate related investments, increased costs for scarce goods, and a decline in tax revenues during major local events. Vulnerable communities such as those who are in poverty, have low incomes, or lack a financial safety net, are likely to suffer the most. The City will develop a climate preparedness and adaptation plan that considers equitable approaches.

Public response to climate change also presents opportunities for Olympia. The shift to a low carbon economy is underway, spurring advancement in technologies and growth of the green job sector. Fueled by federal investment, along with strong State and local climate goals, we anticipate the need for hundreds of skilled workers, such as solar installers and electric vehicle technicians, to help us transition to net zero carbon. Additionally, Olympia's climate adaptation values are likely to make us more successful at attracting and retaining younger workers. By working with partners, the City can influence the accessibility of such job training programs for Olympia residents.

Creating a unique and welcoming places and spaces environment in Olympia with

ongoing focus on high density neighborhoods will benefit climate mitigation by increasing urban density and reducing urban sprawl, supporting use of public transit, and increasing walking and biking.

Advancing a healthy community

Economic development and community health have a symbiotic relationship. Our efforts to increase equitable access to education, workforce, and business opportunities aim to improve household financial stability and reduce poverty rates. These factors directly impact public health by enabling community members to access better healthcare services, nutritious food, and adequate affordable housing, thereby reducing stress and improving overall mental health and well-being. In turn, a healthy community fosters a productive and engaged workforce, attracts businesses and investment, and contributes to overall economic prosperity.

Social cohesion and community engagement are also important for the health of a community. The global pandemic disrupted many traditional community gatherings and social conventions. It separated people from their work placesworkplaces, fraternal social organizations, and schools. Opportunity youth rates (people of school age who have dropped out of school and are not engaged in employment or training) have increased in many areas, as has the percentage of high school seniors pursuing continuing education. The City and community partners must proactively engage all youth, invest in mental health resources, and broaden access to career and training resources.

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~~The Olympia School District is another significant governmental employer with approximately 1,300 employees providing K-12 education to approximately 9,000 students. The school district's Capital Facility Plan includes over \$178,000,000 in construction projects and another \$11,680,000 in small works projects. The Olympia School District's operating budget is over \$92,000,000. Future plans include a new middle school in Southeast Olympia.~~

~~Health care:~~

~~Olympia is also a regional medical center, serving Thurston, Mason, Gray's Harbor and Lewis counties. Health care is the Thurston County's second largest employment sector, with an estimated 11,595 jobs and is projected to continue growing in the future.~~

~~Retail:~~

~~Olympia's shopping mall, auto mall, and downtown business core make it the region's largest retail center, providing significant sales tax revenue. Retail provides an estimated 11,076 jobs in 2010 and is the county's third largest employment sector. However, unlike our government and health care employers, retail provides an average living wage that is just under what the City~~

estimates is needed for a single adult in Olympia.

The *Investment Strategy* report adds, “The City of Olympia is projected to accommodate an estimated additional 18,000 jobs by 2035.ⁱ Of those, almost 75% of new jobs in Olympia will be in commercial sectors. Jobs in industrial sectors (10%) and government (15%) will make up the remainder of new employment. Countywide, the sectors with the largest forecasted new jobs are professional and business services. However, Thurston Regional Planning Council’s forecasts have construction employment growing substantially with total construction employment more than doubling by 2040 from 5,620 in 2010 to 12,700. Manufacturing employment is also forecasted to increase but at a much slower rate adding about 500 jobs from 2010 to 2040.”

The Port of Olympia

Olympia is also the only city in Thurston County with a deep water harbor. The Port of Olympia operates a marine import and export terminal, the largest recreational boating marina on South Puget Sound, and a state-of-the-art boatyard. The Port is also the home of many private, marine-related businesses, the Batdorf & Bronson Roasting House, the Olympia Farmers’ Market, and many professional offices and retail businesses.

Among our partners in economic development, the Port of Olympia has the closest relationship to Olympia’s economy, and its mission is to grow the Thurston County economy, move people and goods, and improve the County’s recreation options and environment. The Port is a special purpose district, and its boundaries are the same as Thurston County’s.

The Port owns 200 acres along Budd Inlet near Olympia’s central business district. The Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvements, the Port’s development plan for its Olympia properties, includes industrial uses in the vicinity of the Marine Terminal, recreational boating uses at the Swantown Marina and Boatyard, and mixed uses in the Market, North Point, and East Bay Districts. Recreational uses are envisioned throughout its mixed-use districts and the Marina. For example, the East Bay District is a significant investment and downtown redevelopment opportunity, home to the Hands On Children’s Museum and East Bay Plaza.

Although a smaller factor in our local economy than state government, the Port’s potential is significant and gives the City an opportunity to further diversify its economy.

Education, Entertainment, and Geography

Olympia is the region’s restaurant, art, and entertainment center. There are three nearby

colleges, The Evergreen State College, St. Martin's University, and South Puget Sound Community College, which have a major impact on the culture of our community and our high average level of education.

As a result of The Evergreen State College, the City of Olympia has become home to many innovative entrepreneurs and artists that were originally attracted to our community to go to school. Evergreen is widely acknowledged as one of the nation's premier liberal arts institutions and its location here provides an opportunity for continued and expanded collaboration on entrepreneurial development. Evergreen hosts three masters programs—in public administration, teaching and environmental studies. Each of these programs provides an opportunity to collaborate with the college to attract and foster complementary research and development activities. Our community serves as a learning laboratory for students and potentially an international destination for learning and cultural exchange. The City should continue to seek opportunities for direct partnerships with the college on program development, capital facilities planning and student housing. A physical presence in our downtown could create opportunities for both the City and the College.

In addition, Olympia is well-served by its highway network, which includes Interstate 5 and Highway 101, with links to State Route 8 and the Olympic and Kitsap Peninsulas. All of this means Olympia's location provides easy access to a variety of recreational opportunities—from bike trails and kayaking within our city limits, to skiing and hiking in the mountains, to beachcombing along the coast and regional customers for the area's retail businesses and health care providers.

Thurston County benefits from regional economic growth and activity in the Puget Sound region that filters down to the County as the region grows. Joint Base Lewis-McChord has increased demand for housing in the region, particularly in Lacey.

There are growing signs of an urban infill market in Olympia in part driven by a changing demographic oriented towards urban living. In the last ten years, most recent building activity in Olympia has focused on rehabilitation or remodeling of existing space with limited new development. As growth has rebounded, multifamily development has been the first sector to recover. Builders are taking advantage of sites that are easily developable and/or high amenity areas. Continued population growth in the region will generate demand for additional housing and commercial services, such as general services, retail, and health care. To be competitive Olympia must understand the strengths and weaknesses of its market.

A Healthy Economy Enhances our Quality of Life

Goals and Policies

G.E1 Olympia has a thriving and diversified economy with pathways to prosperity available to everyone.

PE1.1: Develop and support partner programs and strategies that stimulate thriving living-wage job creation.

PE1.2: Invest in inclusive programs that reduce barriers and inequities so that all people can more easily access education and career training opportunities.

PE1.3: Invest in programs that provide youth with mentorship, opportunities to grow soft skills and leadership abilities, and introduce them to college and career pathways.

PE1.4: Engage with workforce development partners to ensure an adequate supply of workers for in-demand occupations.

PE1.5: Support initiatives that help diversify the local economy to supplement our stable public sector base and reduce reliance on goods and services from outside the community.

PE1.6: Explore partnership opportunities with the Squaxin Island Tribe that expand their economic and cultural opportunities in Olympia.

PE1.7: Seek sustainable funding sources and opportunities to implement the Olympia Strong plan.

G.E2 Businesses and entrepreneurs thrive in Olympia and contribute to Olympia's economic diversity.

PE2.1 Foster a desirable setting for business investment and activity.

PE2.2 Diversify the local economy in a way that builds on our stable public sector base, addresses systemic barriers, and by supporting businesses that can reduce reliance on goods and services from outside the community.

PE2.3: Whenever possible buy from local businesses-as-a-way to strengthen the local economy.

PE2.4: Support equitable business training and other programs and resources that create avenues for a broad cross section of diverse community members to access business ownership opportunities.

PE2.5: Partner and collaborate with WOBA, ODA, and other small business districts and champions to create and maintain viable small business centers throughout Olympia.

PE2.6: Celebrate Olympia businesses for their support of community goals such as sustainability, climate action, and equity.

G.E3 Collaboration**Olympia collaborates with partners to maximizes economic opportunity.**

PE3.1: Collaborate with regional economic development partners and neighboring jurisdictions to develop and implement a regional strategy for creating a sustainable and inclusive economy.

PE3.2: Work closely with state and county governments to ensure their offices and facilities are in the City of Olympia, which is both the state’s capitol and the county seat.

PE3.3: Collaborate with The Evergreen State College, St. Martin’s University, and South Puget Sound Community College on their efforts to educate students in skills that will be needed in the future, to contribute to our community’s cultural life, and attract new residents.

PE3.4: Encourage The Evergreen State College and South Puget Sound Community College to establish a physical presence downtown.

PE3.5: Collaborate with hospitals, other health care providers, and regional economic development partners to identify actions the City could take to support the health care sector in ensuring public health and their vitality as a major local employment base.

PE3.6: Support appropriate economic development efforts of our neighboring jurisdictions, recognizing—the entire region benefits from new jobs regardless of where located—and -and-their role in fostering activities, such as manufacturing, freight transportation, and air transportation.

PE3.7: Collaborate with the Port in its role of facilitating economic development, while continuing to exercise regulatory control over Port development and operations.

PE3.8: Balance the Port’s need for truck and rail transportation corridors, while minimizing conflicts with other traffic needs and land use goals.

PE3.9: Coordinate funding opportunities with other public stakeholders (the County, Intercity Transit agency, Port of Olympia, State of Washington, Olympia School District, and others) with the City’s CFP for major infrastructure investments to maximize the impact of those investments.

PE3.10: Coordinate with the State of Washington on economic investments, policies, and other activities within Olympia.

PE3.11: Collaborate with regional economic development partners to prepare for future economic disruptions and emergencies and implement effective disaster recovery.

G.E4 Olympia has a strong revenue base.

PE4.1: Support established industry clusters such as automotive, retail, healthcare, construction, food system, and professional services for their value in providing a graduated range of employment opportunities and essential tax revenues.

PE4.2: Periodically review major revenue-generating sectors and identify actions the City can take to help maintain their economic health.

PE4.3: Ensure the total amount of land planned for commercial and industrial uses is sufficient and appropriately zoned to meet expected demand. Promote commercial infill and a mix of land uses, especially in areas designated as Urban Corridors.

PE4.4 Encourage businesses to export goods and services to regional, national, or international markets, but keep jobs and dollars in Olympia.

PE4.5 Regularly review the development market to identify changing circumstances that create barriers or opportunities for investment in our community.

Enriching our Sense of Place and Creative Economy

Olympia has long been a uniquely creative and culture-rich community with many cultures to celebrate and strong support from the people and organizations who call it home. This benefits our economy in several ways: 1) enriches our sense of place, leading to greater pride and individual investment in the community, 2) increases tourism, bringing new dollars into the community, and 3) provides opportunity to grow jobs in the creative sector.

Olympians desire a community that offers a variety of entertainment, culturales, arts, heritage, and recreational opportunities that honor the rich diversity of our community.

"Arts" encompasses a wide range of expressions, including but not limited to visual and culinary arts, local artisans, live music, theater, and diverse live performances and festivals across various genres. We also know that employers and entrepreneurs often choose to locate in cities with a vibrant mix of activities and culture because talented workers want to live in such places. Thus, we see enhancing Olympia's creative vibe and sense of place as both a benefit to those who already live here, and a way to attract quality employment opportunities and expand on Olympia's reputation as the unique place in South Puget Sound.

Data shows that a sense of place—a sense of authenticity, continuity, and uniqueness—is critical to a community's future economic opportunity. One study found that cities in which residents reported high levels of attachment and passion

for their communities had tend to have the highest rates of economic growth over time. Qualities such as a welcome and open feeling, attractiveness, walkability, and a variety of social events and venues all contributed to this emotional bond. Parks and trees, community and historic landmarks, and public art also contributed to this at hard-to-define valuable sense of place.

Those same qualities that contribute to the strong emotional bonds many residents form with Olympia also appeal to visitors. Visitors contribute to our economy by shopping, dining, taking in a performance in one of our theaters, and spending the night in a hotel.

Downtown Olympia is the cultural heart of the community. It has a destination waterfront that attracts recreational boaters from throughout Puget Sound and beyond. It is home to a thriving arts scene, including the Washington Center for Performing Arts, Capitol Theater, State Theater, Olympia Family Theater, a burgeoning Creative District and numerous events like the twice-annual Arts Walk.

Downtown is also home to the state's largest farmer-operated farmers' market. Adjacent to our waterfront, Olympia Farmers' Market serves as a tourist destination and a place for residents to purchase local. This beloved community space draws upward of 350,000 visitors annually and serves as a link to a substantial network of small family-owned farms and businesses. The market serves as a tourist attraction destination and a place for local residents to purchase local. Adjacent to the Farmers' Market, which draws upward of 350,000 visitors annually.

In addition to the brick-and-mortar brick-and-mortar establishments, Olympia is host to a wide variety of events and festivals including the Pet Parade, Olympia Brewfest, Arts Walk, Procession of the Species, Olympia Harbor Days, Juneteenth, Port Plaza concerts and movie nights and Lakefair, Capital City Pride, to name just a few and more. Most of these events take place within Olympia's state-recognized Creative District.

The City's most recent investment converted the historic Armory facility into an Art Hub Creative Campus. A, and Inspire Olympia Cultural Access Program tax revenue, approved by Olympia voters, will ensure broad access to a variety of arts, sciences, heritage, and cultural programs and experiences.

But Olympia's creative economy is not limited to traditional arts and culture activities. It includes a growing volume of technology-based occupations, from graphic designers to software developers, engineers, and innovators, who contribute significantly to the local gross domestic profit and generate multiplier effects that spread economic benefits to other sectors.

The City will continue to invest in creating lively places and spaces downtown, as well as other locations throughout the City, fostering a local sense of pride and broader reputation for Olympia as a place of un-matched vitality.

Goals and Policies

G.E5: Olympia has a thriving creative economy.

PE5.1: Continue to provide equitable programs and services that support visual and performing arts activities in Olympia.

PE5.2: Establish a creative campus with and for the community that serves as a hub for community members, organizations, and artists to collaborate, and provides physical space for creative activities and expression.

PE5.3: Work with partners to grow an inclusive the creative sector workforce and provide artists and creative industry entrepreneurs with training, technical support, and other resources to help them succeed.

PE5.4: Provide grant funding to increase public access to local arts, cultures, heritage and science programs and experiences, especially for youth and traditionally underserved populations.

PE5.5: Create entry points for many diverse artists, creatives, innovators, and culture-bearers to showcase their work.

PE5.6: Invest in initiatives that showcase Olympia's innovative and entrepreneurial spirit and enhance Olympia's status as a magnet for creative economy -related tourism and employment.

PE5.7: Help artists and creatives develop networks to grow the creative sector locally and regionally.

PE5.8: Support initiatives that make it affordable for artists and creatives to continue to live and work in Olympia.

PE5.9: Support and foster the creative economy by reducing barriers to adaptive reuse of existing buildings to help initiative innovative ideas and spaces.

PE 5.10 Actively monitor emerging technology and trends, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), to determine its impact or value to our economy.

G.E6: Downtown is a popular destination that contributes to Olympia's economic vibrancy.

PE6.1: Support a safe and vibrant downtown with many small businesses, great public places, events, art, and activities from morning through evening.

PE6.2: Support lively and active downtown parks and waterfront attractions.

PE6.3: Promote high-density housing downtown for a range of incomes.

PE6.4: Support street beautification efforts, like regular cleaning, planting and protecting trees and installing decorative features as a way to help encourages private economic development and redevelopment activities.

PE6.5: Support continuation of ongoing accessible transportation options like the Dash Shuttle and zero fare transit as a means of linking the Capital Campus and downtown and connecting, and zero fare transit as a means to connect people to jobs and services. Support public transit to connect people with jobs and services, including increasing the span and frequency of public transit between the Capitol Campus and Downtown Olympia.

PE6.6: Use equitable and inclusive planning processes and tools to improve the economic and social health of downtown.

G.E7 Tourism is a community revenue source.

PE7.1: Support continued investments in signature places and spaces, beautification efforts and events as a way to continually improve upon Olympia's unique character, natural beauty and attractiveness to tourists.

PE7.2: Implement strategies to enhance diverse heritage, cultural, and other tourism opportunities; in partnership with Experience Olympia and Beyond.

G.E8 Historic resources are used to promote economic stability in the City.

PE8.1: Strengthen economic vitality by helping to stabilize and improve property values in historic areas through the continued support of the Heritage Commission and planning to protect and promote our historic resources.

PE8.2: Encourage new development to harmonize with existing historic buildings and areas.

PE8.3: Protect and enhance the City's ability to attract tourists and visitors through preservation of historic resources.

PE8.4: UtilizeR renovation, reuse and repair of existing buildings is often when preferable to new construction and should be done, doing so in a manner that protects and enhances the resource when historic properties are involved.

PE8.5: Help low- and moderate-income individuals rehabilitate their historic properties.

Public and Private Investment

Olympia enjoys a relatively healthy economy and stable revenue base, making it possible for it to invest in public improvements and services. These include the Washington Center for the Performing Arts, The Olympia Center, Percival Landing, the [Olympia](#) Farmers Market, new sewer capacity, new roads, and other ~~needed~~ infrastructure. All of this makes Olympia increasingly attractive to private investors, which will further increase our revenue base, and make more community improvements possible. ~~However, the City should not make these sorts of investments without also considering the long-term maintenance and operations costs it will also incur.~~

Downtown Olympia

~~Downtown Olympia is a special place. For many years it has served as Thurston County's only downtown. It has the only urban waterfront in the region, attracting recreational boaters from throughout Puget Sound. It has the only performing arts center, is the region's banking sector and is the recreational hub for the region.~~

~~Downtown Olympia is also home to the state's largest farmers operated farmers' market. The Olympia Farmers' Market serves as a link to a substantial network of small family-owned farms and businesses. The market serves as a tourist attraction and destination and a place for local residents to purchase local food. Farmers Markets have proven to be a good way to foster the development and expansion of locally owned businesses. In recent years small neighborhood markets are beginning to appear in Olympia with the hope of fostering more neighborhood centers and even more accessibility to locally grown and produced products.~~

~~Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings see the streets of downtown come alive with theater patrons, diners and live music fans. Recent enhancements such as the Hands on Children's Museum, East Bay Plaza, LOTT Clean Water Alliance's WET Center and Percival Landing reconstruction add to downtown's status as a destination.~~

~~The proximity of the Capital Campus to downtown creates a strong relationship between the campus and downtown that is enhanced by the presence of the Dash Shuttle, an Intercity Transit bus that operates on 10 minute headways. This free link between the downtown and the state campus is helpful for downtown commerce and a convenience to workers and visitors that come to Olympia to participate in the State Legislative sessions.~~

~~Downtown remains a work in progress and the City has invested heavily from both a capital facilities and services perspective. From 2012 to 2014 the City has used an action-oriented program known as the Downtown Project to effect change. The Downtown Project has included key elements such as enhancing the downtown walking patrol, replacing parking pay stations, creating a Downtown Ambassador program, establishing an Alcohol Impact Area, and construction of parklets to name just a few.~~

~~The City has initiated a Community Renewal Area (CRA) planning process for downtown. The~~

Community Renewal Area law was created by the state specifically to give communities the tools that they need in order to help areas such as the downtown move forward. Washington law (RCW 35.81) allows cities to establish a Community Renewal Area through the designation of a geographic area that contains blight and the creation of a Community Renewal Plan for addressing that blight. Many Washington cities have used CRA to develop and implement redevelopment plans, including Vancouver, Shoreline, Everett, Bremerton, and Anacortes.

Olympia's downtown is the urban center for the entire region—residents and business owners would all benefit from a more active, vibrant downtown. However, parts of downtown are widely recognized as “blighted”, with several condemned or obsolete buildings occupying key properties. Soil contamination, excessive amounts of surface parking, soils subject to liquefaction and rising seas also contribute to the blight. Redevelopment is stuck despite the area's unparalleled assets. The City has an interest in improving the downtown and enhancing its economic productivity in a manner consistent with the rest of this plan. The creation of a CRA may be one way to accomplish this objective.

In 2013 the City initiated an economic development planning process to consider creating a Community Renewal Area in downtown and to provide an assessment of the broader real estate market. This process resulted in the preparation of two key reports: “Investment Strategy: Olympia's Opportunity Areas” and the Downtown Olympia “Community Renewal Area Feasibility Study”. These reports will help to refine the City's approach to economic development over the coming years and underpin the City's Community Renewal Area planning process.

The Investment Strategy report provided a community wide assessment of key redevelopment opportunity areas. In addition to downtown, six geographic areas were examined in detail:

- Kaiser/Harrison—Potential for neighborhood commercial/mixed-use/retail district on large single ownership tract;
- Olympia Landfill—City owned, potential major retail site adjacent to existing major retail area;
- Division/Harrison—Potential neighborhood center adjacent to established neighborhoods;
- Headwaters—Large multi-ownership parcel with wetland amenity and infrastructure challenges;
- K-Mart Site—(currently vacant) on major close-in retail corridor.

Downtown Focus Area for Community Renewal Area Planning

The Investment Strategy report recommends that the City manage its development area assets as a portfolio that adheres to the community vision. This approach includes: (1) strategically investing in infrastructure improvements, such as roadways, streetscape improvements, and

~~property acquisition; (2) making necessary or desired regulatory adjustments, such as zoning changes; and (3) creating partnerships with developers and property owners to generate development returns that remain sensitive to market demand.~~

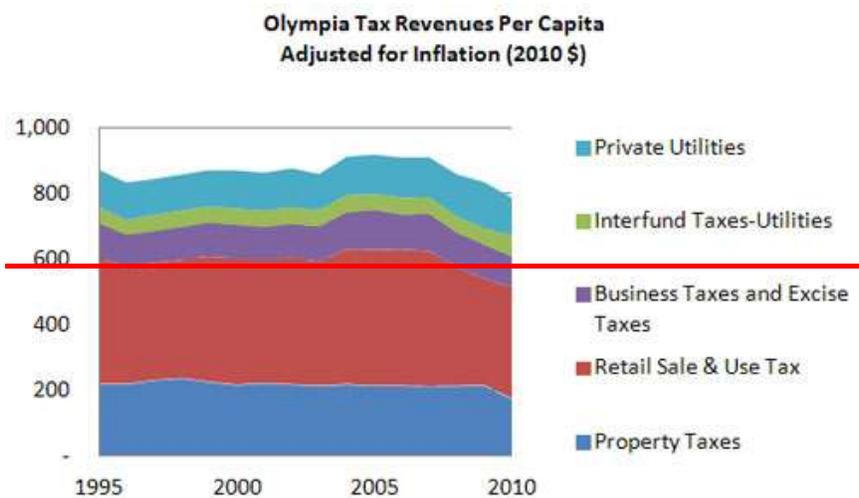
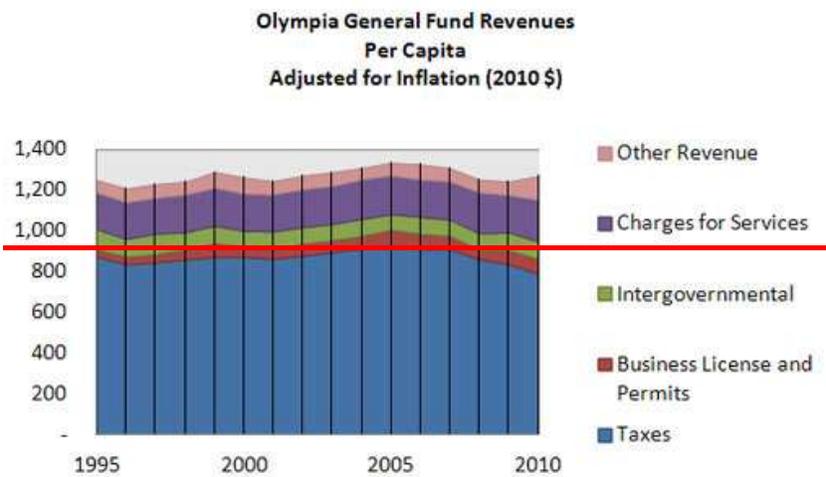
~~The CRA Feasibility Study provides the outline and support materials for the ultimate creation of a CRA in Downtown Olympia.~~

~~Key findings related to downtown from the Feasibility Study include:~~

- ~~• Demand from those users who need to be downtown (such as state government, the Port, and related uses) is not a growing part of the economy.~~
- ~~• The redevelopment hurdle downtown is higher than other locations because of higher land and construction costs.~~
- ~~• Commercial rents are not yet high enough to justify new commercial construction in Downtown Olympia.~~
- ~~• Office rents have decreased as vacancies have increased.~~
- ~~• Retail rents are more stable, but have also decreased.~~
- ~~• Low vacancy rates and modest rent increases for apartments citywide, as well as some anecdotal evidence suggest that there is near term demand for multifamily housing.~~
- ~~• Over \$100 million of public investment has been made downtown by the City and Port of Olympia in new buildings and parks, including a new City Hall, the Hands On Children's Museum, LOTT Clean Water Alliance offices, East Bay Plaza, and Percival Landing.~~

~~Although these public facilities help to improve our quality of life, public facilities cost money to operate and maintain. Unless they directly contribute to commerce they become a burden and are difficult to sustain within the City's general fund budget. In order to protect and enhance our quality of life it will be critically important for the City to make public investments and form public-private partnerships that increase commerce in ways that are consistent with the community's values. The City should not make these sorts of investments without also considering the long-term maintenance and operations costs it will incur.~~

~~Supporting Revenue Sources
Olympia General Fund Revenues
Per Capita~~



Olympia's revenue comes from a mix of taxes and fees. The Olympia General Fund Revenues Per Capita table shows the sources of the City's General Fund revenues, over the last 15 years on a per capita basis. Olympia's largest revenue source is taxes, which represents well over half of the General Fund's revenue. The Olympia Tax Revenues Per Capita table provides a breakdown of taxes by various categories. Significant tax revenues come from commercial hubs such as the auto mall and regional shopping areas, construction and construction-related industries.

While taxes on a per capita basis have generally increased during the last few decades, our

~~revenue from sales, business and property taxes fluctuates with the economy. Revenue from sales tax falls when consumers spend less. The property tax we collect per capita falls when property tax levies don't keep pace with population growth. In recent years property devaluation has constrained the City's capacity to incur debt. Finally, property taxes have been limited by Initiative 747, passed by Washington voters in 2001, which limits growth in property tax revenue to 1 percent per year. This is a rate that generally lags well behind the increasing costs of providing those services. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics the consumer price index for the western United States has averaged 2.27% for the past 10 years.~~

~~Major City services depend on these tax revenues. City residents, as well as workers and shoppers coming to Olympia, require maintained streets, police and fire protection, water and sewer service, and more. Growing neighborhoods require these same services, plus parks (provided by the City) and schools (provided by the school district). The challenge is to provide these services at high quality for the best cost, and meet those standards when City revenues decline, by finding new revenue options or cutting services.~~

~~Maintaining and improving Olympia's infrastructure puts another large demand on the City's funds, made even more challenging as federal and state assistance has declined. Adequate and dependable infrastructure is critical to our ability to serve residents and businesses. our Our investments have improved our public spaces and quality of life, leading the way and have provided the impetus for more private investment to follow.~~

~~Community Investment~~

Private investment can expand ~~our~~ our community's economy and strengthen its material prosperity. But basic infrastructure needs to be in place, or underway, in order to interest quality private businesses in locating or expanding in Olympia. For this reason, it's critical for our community to invest resources in capital facilities that will support a healthy local economy and its values and vision for the future.

~~Recent capital investments have included:~~

- ~~• Olympia's new City Hall and the reopening of Percival Landing (Phase 1) in 2011, together an investment of over \$60 million.~~
- ~~• In the East Bay area, the LOTT Clean Water Alliance's WET Science Center, East Bay Plaza, and the Hands On Children's Museum are providing more family activities downtown.~~
- ~~• New sidewalks and transportation corridors at Boulevard Road and Harrison Avenue now make it easier to get around by foot, bike, bus or car.~~

- ~~Our new Fire Station 4 has lowered 911 response times.~~
- ~~Planned upgrades to our water supply will help to ensure an adequate and high quality water supply for decades to come.~~

~~All of these projects are examples of how our investments have improved our public spaces and quality of life and have provided the impetus for more private investment to follow.~~



~~Crown Beverage Packaging's 115 employees make 1.5 billion beverage cans each year from recycled aluminum. They have been part of Olympia since 1959.~~

~~Over the next 20 years, Olympia must continue to make judicious "up-front" investments that bring development to targeted areas, using its partnerships as effectively as possible. To keep them affordable, such investments will need to be located in the downtown, Investment Strategy Report opportunity areas or Urban Corridors. Projects that "leap-frog" to remote sites outside of our existing infrastructure can be prohibitively expensive to develop.~~

~~The Investment Strategy report recommends that the City should proactively:~~

- ~~**Review changing market dynamics** to identify new barriers and opportunities to allow the City to invest in the most market feasible projects.~~
- ~~**Develop relationships with property owners and other stakeholders to learn about their interests and short term and long term development**~~

~~**goals.** Given the barriers to development described in the report, the City will need to establish new partnerships with property owners and developers if it wishes to achieve development in the opportunity areas that is compatible with the City's Comprehensive Plan. Community and neighborhood stakeholders are also critical to this process.~~

- ~~• **Continue and improve community conversations to better clarify and articulate desired development outcomes and coordinate stakeholders' visions for development.** This work would help to refine the City's policy goals for the opportunity areas and other areas through the comprehensive planning process. Given long-term demographic shifts, the City should support higher density, infill development to achieve multiple public policy goals.~~
- ~~• **Take advantage of opportunities when they present themselves,** which may mean that the City would focus on new opportunity areas, or move forward with actions in existing opportunity areas ahead of schedule.~~
- ~~• **Coordinate funding opportunities with other public stakeholders** (the County, transit agency, the Port of Olympia, the State of Washington, others) with the City's CFP for major infrastructure investments that move the implementation forward.~~
- ~~• **Coordinate with planning and implementation in key opportunity areas.** Some initial steps toward implementation are already underway, including the Martin Way Corridor Study and the Comprehensive Plan update. The Martin Way Corridor Study is evaluating infrastructure investments that can improve access and safety for all transportation modes, and spur higher density development. The City could consider combining subarea planning efforts with the comprehensive planning process for the Kaiser/Harrison and Division/Harrison areas.~~

~~In addition to the City's work on the Community Renewal Area Olympia has recently established a Section 108 Loan Program. This program leverages the City's annual CDBG Allocation to create a loan pool to promote economic development opportunities within our community. These funds must be used in a manner consistent with the Department of Housing and Urban Development's regulations. Generally these funds can be used to support economic development projects that create jobs for low to moderate income people or support reinvestment in areas such as downtown where low to moderate income people live.~~

~~Economic development efforts must be consistent with growth management goals and not strain the capacity of our natural resources. They must be consistent with the efficient and appropriate use of land. The impact of new business must not compromise the local environment. While growth can improve a community's quality of life, economic development must be carefully planned. Our investment today in new buildings and streets should not~~

damage the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

~~Goals and Policies~~ Goals and Policies

GE9GE1

~~GE1 Olympia has a stable economy that provides jobs that pay a living wage.~~

~~PE1.1 Provide a desirable setting for business investment and activity.~~

~~:~~

~~PE1.2 Develop or support programs and strategies that encourage living wage jobs.~~

~~GE2 Olympia has a strong revenue base.~~

~~PE2.1 Encourage retail, office, medical and service activities for their value in providing employment and tax revenues.~~

~~PE2.2 Identify major revenue generating sectors and identify actions the City can take to help maintain their economic health.~~

~~PE2.3 Ensure that the total amount of land planned for commercial and industrial uses is sufficient for expected demand.~~

~~PE2.4 Diversify the local economy in a way that builds on our stable public sector base, and by supporting businesses that can reduce reliance on goods and services from outside the community.~~

~~PE2.5 Encourage employers to export goods and services to regional, national or international markets, but keep jobs and dollars in Olympia.~~

~~PE2.6 Regularly review the development market to identify changing circumstances that create barriers or opportunities for investment in our community.~~

~~PE2.7 Use the City's Section 108 Loan program to promote economic investment and job creation and redevelopment activity that benefits low to moderate income people in our community.~~

~~**GE3 A vital downtown provides a strong center for Olympia's economy.**~~

~~PE3.1 Support a safe and vibrant downtown with many small businesses, great public places, events, and activities from morning through evening.~~

~~PE3.2 Support lively and active downtown parks and waterfront attractions.~~

~~PE3.3 Promote high density housing downtown for a range of incomes.~~

~~PE3.4 Protect existing trees and plant new ones as a way to help encourage private economic development and redevelopment activities.~~

~~PE3.5 Support continuation of the Dash Shuttle as a means of linking the Capital Campus and downtown.~~

~~PE3.6 Use tools such as the Downtown Project, Community Renewal Area downtown plan and other planning processes and tools to improve the economic and social health of downtown.~~

GE4 The City achieves maximum economic, environmental and social benefit from public infrastructure.

~~PE4~~PE9.1: Plan our investments in infrastructure with the goal of balancing economic, environmental, and social needs, supporting a variety of potential economic sectors, and creating a pattern of inclusive development we can sustain into the future.

PE9

~~PE4.2 Stimulate and generate: Use strategic public infrastructure investments to stimulate private investment in economic development and redevelopment activities as recommended in the Investment Strategy Report.~~

PE4PE9.3: Make decisions to invest in public infrastructure projects after analysis ~~determining~~projecting their total costs over their estimated useful lives, and their benefit to equitable environmental, economic, and social systems.

PE9

PE4.4: Consider whether the public cost of new or improved infrastructure can be recovered through increased revenues the City can expect from the private investment the improvement will attract.

PE4PE9.5: Identify and take advantage of infrastructure grants, loans, and other incentives to achieve the goals of this Comprehensive Plan.

~~PE4.6 Economic uncertainty created by site contamination can be a barrier to development in downtown and elsewhere in our community; identify~~**PE9.6:** Identify potential tools, partnerships and resources that can be used to create more economic certainty for developments by better characterizing contamination where doing so fulfills a public purpose.

PE4PE9.7: Identify where new and upgraded utilities will be needed to serve areas zoned for commercial and industrial use, and encourage the development of utilities to service these areas.

PE4PE9.8: Investigate the feasibility of the City providing telecommunications and broadband infrastructure, high speed internet connectivity or other new forms of infrastructure.

PE4PE9.9: Collaborate with public and private partners to finance infrastructure needed to develop targeted commercial, residential, industrial, and mixed-use areas (such as ~~Downtown Investment Strategy Report opportunity areas~~the three High Density Neighborhoods and along Urban Corridors) with water, sewer, electricity, street, street frontage, public parking, telecommunications, or rail improvements, as needed and consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

PE4PE9.10: Encourage new development in areas the City has designated for infill before considering proposals to expand land-use areas, or adding new ones.

~~PE4PE9.11-Serve: In coordination with development, serve~~ sites ~~to be~~ designated for industrial or commercial development with required utilities and other services on a cost-effective basis and at a level appropriate to the uses planned for the area ~~and coordinated with development of the site.~~

~~PE4PE9.12-Avoiding: Avoid~~ building lengthy and expensive service extensions that would cost more than could ever be recovered from revenues.

~~PE9.13: Public rights-of-way are a form of public infrastructure that can be used for economic and social benefits, such as street fairs, parklets, or other similar uses.~~

GE5G.E10: The City has responsive and efficient services and permitting process.

~~PE5PE10.1:~~ Maintain the City's high quality customer service and continuously seek to improve it.

~~PE5PE10.2:~~ Use regulatory ~~and fee-based~~ incentives to encourage sustainable practices.

~~PE5PE10.3:~~ Improve the ~~responsivenesspredictability,~~ and ~~efficiencycost-effectiveness~~ of the City's ~~permit system, in part by identifying and removing waste, lack of clarity, duplication of efforts and other process inefficiencies that can occur in the~~ development review process.

~~PE5.4~~ ~~Create more predictability in development review process to reduce costs, without by having clear rules and procedures,~~ and ~~by~~ eliminating ~~protections.~~

~~PE5.5~~ ~~Eliminate redundancy in review processes, and create clearer rules and other process inefficiencies.~~

~~PE5.6PE10.4:~~ Create a review process that is easy for all parties to understand at every stage and that invites input from affected parties as early as possible in the development process.

~~PE5.7~~PE10.5: Use proactive planning processes and tools such as Form Based Codes, Subarea Plans, Focus Area Plans, Community Renewal Area planning ~~and other proactive planning processes and tools~~ to define and develop a shared redevelopment vision for specific areas within the community ~~such as those identified in the Investment Strategy Report and elsewhere in this plan.~~GE6.

~~GE6 Collaboration with other partners maximizes economic opportunity.~~

~~PE6.1~~ Support appropriate economic development efforts of our neighboring jurisdictions, recognizing that the entire region benefits from new jobs, regardless of where they are.

~~PE6.2~~ Collaborate with neighboring jurisdictions to develop a regional strategy for creating a sustainable economy.

~~PE6.3~~ Look for economies of scale when providing services at the regional level.

~~PE6.4~~ Prepare preliminary studies for priority development sites (such as Downtown, Investment Strategy Report opportunity areas or Urban Corridors) in advance, so the City is prepared for development applications, and the process can be more efficient.

~~PE6.5~~ Collaborate with local economic development organizations to create new PE10.6: Develop and maintain redevelopment standards that are flexible and cost-effective to enable existing living-wage jobs.

~~PE6.6~~ Work closely with state and county governments to ensure their offices and facilities are in the City of Olympia, which is both the state's capitol and the county seat. Continue to work with the State of Washington on its Preferred Leasing Areas Policy and collaborate with Thurston County government to accommodate the needs for county courthouse-related facilities.

~~PE6.7~~ Collaborate with The Evergreen State College, St. Martin's University, and South Puget Sound Community College on their efforts to educate students in skills that will be needed in the future, to contribute to our community's cultural life, and attract new

residents.

~~**PE6.8** Encourage The Evergreen State College, St. Martin's University, and South Puget Sound Community College to establish a physical presence in downtown.~~

~~**PE6.9** Collaborate with hospitals and other health care providers to identify actions the City could take to support their role in ensuring public health and their vitality as a major local employment base and to establish a physical presence in downtown.~~

~~**PE6.10** Work with the Thurston Economic Development Council to identify businesses that support the health care sector, and identify what the City can do to help them to succeed.~~

~~**PE6.11** Support our neighboring jurisdictions in their role as the regional center for other activities, such as manufacturing, freight transportation, and air transportation.~~

~~**PE6.12** Collaborate with the Port in its role of facilitating economic development, while continuing to exercise regulatory control over Port development and operations.~~

~~**PE6.13** Balance the Port's need for truck and rail transportation corridors, while minimizing conflicts with other traffic needs and land use goals.~~

~~**PE6.14** Coordinate funding opportunities with other public stakeholders (the County, Intercity Transit agency, the Port of Olympia, the State of Washington, Olympia School District, others) with the City's CFP for major infrastructure investments to maximize the impact of those investments.~~

Community and Economy

Several recent studies suggest that a sense of "place"—a sense of authenticity, continuity and uniqueness—is the key to a community's future economic opportunity. One study found that cities in which residents reported highest levels of attachment to and passion for their communities also had the highest rates of economic growth over time. These studies also discovered that qualities such as a welcome and open feeling, attractiveness, walkability, and a variety of social events and venues all contributed to this emotional bond. Parks and trees,

community and historic landmarks, and public art also contributed to that hard-to-define "sense of place."

In 2009, Olympia was selected as one of the Top 10 Best Cities in the nation, by Kiplinger's Personal Finance Magazine. While identifying state government as the "keystone of Olympia's economy," it called Olympia itself a "cultural diamond in the rough" where a thriving visual and performing arts scene is celebrated. It is our individuality as a community—and our quiriness—that sets us apart from other communities, and which makes Olympia such a great place to live and start a business.

According to the 2011 Thurston County Creative Vitality Index, more than 650 "creative jobs" were added to the community between 2006 and 2009. These include public relations specialists, writers, librarians, photographers, architects, and others in "creative occupations."



Downtown Olympia's shops, restaurants and theaters are a draw for residents and visitors alike.

Olympia has received many awards for livability over the years. In 2010, Olympia was recognized as the most secure mid-sized city in the U.S. by Farmers Insurance, based on factors that included crime statistics, weather, risk of natural disasters, housing depreciation, environmental hazards, and life expectancy. In 2010, the *Gallup Healthways Well-Being Index* ranked Olympia in the top 20% of cities in Washington State. Its survey categories included life evaluation, emotional health, physical health, healthy behaviors, work environment, clean water, and general satisfaction with life and work.

Those same qualities that contribute to the strong emotional bonds many residents form with Olympia also appeal to visitors. Visitors contribute to our economy by shopping, dining, taking in a performance in one of our theaters, and spending the night in a hotel. According to the Thurston Visitor and Convention Bureau, in 2013, Thurston

~~County businesses received an estimated \$250 million from visitor spending. This activity generated an estimated \$19 million in state and local taxes that year, and employed an estimated 3,000 people.~~



~~According to the Thurston County Creative Vitality Index, Performing Arts revenue grew 1.4% between 2008 and 2009.~~

~~Olympia's arts community is also a draw for tourism, and one of its beneficiaries.~~

Music

~~According to findings from a study completed by students at The Evergreen State College for the Olympia Arts Commission, the music industry in Olympia generated an estimated \$27 million in total business revenues—including manufacturing, retail, and venue receipts—in 2008, contributing approximately \$2.5 million in local and state taxes for that year.~~

Theater

~~The Arts Alliance of Downtown Olympia determined that in 2009, local theaters brought 167,000 people downtown to attend more than 500 live performances, primarily in the evenings and Sunday matinees. The industry had a \$3.8 million operating budget, and brought in an estimated \$1.6 million to the community in local pay and benefits.~~

Artists as business owners

As of January 2010, State Senate District 22, which includes Olympia, was home to 410 arts-related businesses that employed 1,374 people, according to a report published by the national organization, *Americans for the Arts*. According to the report, "Arts-centric' businesses play an important role in building and sustaining economic vibrancy. They employ a creative workforce, spend money locally, generate government revenue, and are a cornerstone of tourism and economic development."

Small businesses

According to the Thurston Economic Development Council, an estimated 14,000 small businesses are registered in Thurston County, and 92% of them employ 10 or fewer people. Small businesses include service providers, small manufacturers, farmers, artists, and many of the retail businesses that set our community apart from others.



Olykraut is a small artisan company, turning local produce properties to be adapted into value-added product since 2008 new economic uses.

In order for these businesses to provide a living wage [for their owners and employees], they need a strong customer base. Since 2007, the Olympia-based volunteer organization, *Sustainable South Sound* has hosted a "Buy Local" program, which encourages community members to shop at local farms and businesses. The program has an education and outreach program that shows people where their dollars go, based on where they shop, and a savings book with incentives to shop at more than 140 participating farms, businesses and organizations. They also help businesses find local sources for the goods and services they need for their own operations. Business training and support is available through our local colleges and university, the Thurston Economic Development Council, and Olympia-based *Enterprise for Equity*, which helps people with limited incomes start and sustain small businesses.

Goals and Policies

GE7

GE7GE.11: Public and private investors are aware of Olympia's advantages.

PE7PE11.1: Actively promote equitable and inclusive economic activities that are consistent with the values expressed in this Comprehensive Plan.

PE7PE11.2: Market Olympia's advantages to local and out-of-town businesses that may be considering expansions or new facilities in the area.

PE7PE11.3: Define a more active City role in stimulating development, and influencing the design and type of development.

PE7PE11.4: Continue to coordinate and partner with the Thurston County Economic Development Council, and Thurston County Chamber, and others to promote Olympia's economic redevelopment opportunities.

~~GE8 Historic resources are used to promote economic stability in the City.~~

~~**PE8.1** Strengthen economic vitality by helping to stabilize and improve property values in historic areas through the continued support of the Heritage Commission and planning to protect and promote our historic resources.~~

~~**PE8.2** Encourage new development to harmonize with existing historic buildings and areas.~~

~~**PE8.3** Protect and enhance the City's ability to attract tourists and visitors through preservation of historic resources.~~

~~**PE8.4** Renovation, reuse and repair of existing buildings is often preferable to new construction and should be done in a manner that protects and enhances the resource when historic properties are involved.~~

~~**PE8.5** Help low and moderate income individuals rehabilitate their historic properties.~~

A Resilient City

The impacts of climate change are already visible and forecast to become even more disruptive in the years ahead. Future risks include increased flooding along the shoreline areas of Puget Sound, more and faster moving wildfires, extreme fluctuations in weather, and more violent wind and storm events. The City has already adopted climate adaptation strategies and is underway with various actions to mitigate risk. But a lot of work remains to be completed. In this sense, there is also opportunity in the form of new family wage jobs and investment in green infrastructure and carbon reduction strategies.

G.E12: Olympia is well prepared to withstand future economic disruptions and emergencies.

PE12.1: Ensure

~~GE9 Tourism is a community revenue source.~~

~~PE9.1~~ Provide or support services and facilities to help visitors enjoy our community's special events and unique character, and work to fully capture the potential economic benefits of their visits.

~~PE9.2~~ Continue to support efforts to restore, maintain and improve Olympia's local museums and other attractions.

~~PE9.3~~ Support continued tree plantings as a way to continually improve on Olympia's natural beauty and attractiveness to tourists — and to help create a network of scenic roadways and streets.

~~PE9.4~~ Implement strategies to enhance heritage tourism opportunities. **~~E10~~**

~~GE10 Olympia is a regional center for arts and entertainment.~~

~~PE10.1~~ Continue to provide programs and services that support visual and performing arts activities in Olympia.

~~PE10.2~~ Support local art galleries, museums, arts and entertainment facilities, live music venues, arts organizations, and businesses.

~~PE10.3 Examine the feasibility of establishing an arts center for the community.~~

~~GE11 Small businesses contribute to Olympia's economic diversity.~~

~~PE11.1 Promote the concept that buying from local businesses is a way to strengthen the local economy.~~

~~PE11.2 Provide support for start-up businesses. Develop local awareness of the need for is resilient to climate disruptions and fosters business incubator facilities, and allow for more home-based businesses opportunities associated with climate mitigation and adaptation.~~

~~PE12.2: Facilitate a green jobs pipeline for frontline communities.~~

~~PE 12.3: Regularly review the Social Determinants of Health and local data to understand impacts to our community and how they may be addressed.~~

For More Information

- ~~• [Knight Soul of the Community Project](#)  studies that sense of "place" that attached people to their communities~~
- ~~• [Port of Olympia Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvements](#)~~
- ~~• [Port of Olympia 2013-2025 Strategic Plan Vision 2025](#)~~
- ~~• [Thurston Economic Development Council \(EDC\) is the City's primary partner for enterprise development and training and a key liaison for private sector partnerships.](#)~~
- ~~• [Thurston Chamber of Commerce partners with the City on business engagement and workforce training initiatives.](#)~~
- ~~• [Enterprise for Equity provides microenterprise training and support.](#)~~
- ~~• [PacMtn Workforce Development Council is the workforce training lead for a five-county region including Olympia and Thurston County.](#)~~
- ~~• [United Way of Thurston County supports career pathway opportunities and poverty reduction strategies.](#)~~
- ~~• [Olympia Downtown Alliance coordinates a variety of initiatives and advocacy for businesses located in greater downtown Olympia.](#)~~
- ~~• [The Profile](#)  is the Thurston County Regional Planning Council's flagship document that provides demographic, statistical and mapping information.~~
- ~~• [Thurston Economic Vitality Index](#)  provides both a trend analysis and snapshot of Thurston County's economy based upon a series of key indicators.~~
- ~~• [Olympia Strong – A Roadmap to Economic Opportunities](#)~~

- United Way of Thurston County - Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE)
- NW Cooperative Development Center
- Center for Disease Control (CDC) Social Determinants of Health include healthcare access and quality, education access and quality, social and community context, economic stability, and neighborhood and built environment.
 - ~~Washington State County Travel Impacts 1991-2009~~  -examines the economic significance of the travel industry in the 39 counties of Washington state from 1991-2009
 - ~~Investment Strategy—City of Olympia Opportunity Areas~~
 - ~~Downtown Olympia Community Renewal Area Feasibility Study~~
 - ~~Poverty in America Living Wage Calculator~~
 - ~~Sustainable Thurston’s Creating Spaces Preserving Places: A Sustainable Development Plan for the Thurston Region~~

⁴Source: Washington Department of Personnel, 2013

⁴Thurston County Employment Forecast Allocations, 2013: Thurston Regional Planning Council