Public Safety

What Olympia Values:
Olympians value the protection our police, fire, and emergency medical services provide, as well as the proactive steps public safety partners take to prepare for and manage impacts from natural disasters and other emergencies. They also value code enforcement services that help maintain the safety and appeal of our diverse neighborhoods and districts.

Our Vision for the Future:
A secure and resilient community where public safety services are delivered with professionalism and compassion for all. We envision a public safety system that fosters trust, equity, and collective well-being – a system where every individual, regardless of background or circumstance, feels safe, valued, and heard.

Public Safety in Olympia Means:
1. **Equity and Inclusion**
   - Every individual is treated with dignity and respect.
   - Our public safety system works to eliminate disparities and proactively address systemic barriers.
2. **Trust and Accountability**
   - Public safety must be transparent, fair, and accountable to the community.
   - We will engage in authentic collaboration, listen deeply, and act with integrity.
3. **A Community-Centered Approach**
   - We will seek to identify solutions with input from those closest to the challenges.
   - We commit to working in partnership with community members, organizations, and stakeholders to create lasting change.
4. **Compassion and Well-being**
   - We will strive to ensure individuals have the resources and support they need to thrive.
   - We will emphasize prevention, intervention, and holistic approaches that foster wellness.
5. **Innovation and Responsiveness**
   - We will continuously evolve, using data and lived experiences to inform best practices.
   - We will implement strategies that are dynamic, proactive, and tailored to meet the unique needs of our community.
6. **Preparedness and Resilience**
   - We will take proactive steps to manage risks and respond effectively to emergencies.
   - We will strengthen Olympia's ability to withstand and recover from natural disasters and other crises.

Our Commitment
This statement is more than words—it is a framework for action. We pledge to uphold these values in every policy, program, and decision we make. By centering trust, equity, and well-being, and by prioritizing preparedness and resilience, we will build a public safety system that works for everyone.

Sanctuary City

A sanctuary from political persecution
In 1985 the Olympia City Council passed a Resolution declaring the desire for Olympia to be known as a City of Peace where those who are politically persecuted can find safe haven and sanctuary.

A sanctuary regardless of immigration status
In December 2016, the City Council passed a Resolution declaring Olympia a Sanctuary City. Making it clear that the City serves and protects its residents regardless of their immigration status and will remain a safe haven for those who are politically persecuted as expressed in 1985.

A sanctuary for reproductive rights
In 2022 the Olympia City Council passed a Resolution to demonstrate the City's values, declaring the City of Olympia to be a Sanctuary City for reproductive health care and abortion services and recognizing a woman's right to reproductive choice.

A Sanctuary for the LGBTQIA2S+ Community
On January 28, 2025, the Olympia City Council passed a resolution *declaring Olympia a sanctuary city for LGBTQIA2S+ community members, expanding its commitment to ensuring all residents feel safe and supported. The resolution reaffirms the City's dedication to protecting LGBTQIA2S+ rights, explicitly rejecting discrimination, and upholding Washington's Law Against Discrimination.*

Introduction

Community safety requires careful planning, earned trust, and collaborative partnerships. The Olympia Police and Fire Departments have recently completed internal strategic plans aimed at strengthening these foundations — positioning the City to address public safety today and be prepared for the challenges of the future. The Public Safety chapter of the Comprehensive Plan establishes the overarching goals and policies that will guide the Fire Department, Police Department, and Code Enforcement. The shared goals, policies, and commitment to collaboration contribute to a coordinated and proactive approach to safeguarding the community.

In February 2021, in the wake of the murder of George Floyd and a call for social justice from the community, the Olympia City Council approved the use of a community-led process to reimagine the City's public safety system. The goal of the process was to ensure everyone who engages with the City's public safety system can trust that it is just, equitable, and without bias.

A Community Work Group of eight community members, representing a cross-section of Olympia's demographics, expertise, and experiences led an 18-month effort to listen, hear, and understand how Olympia community members experience public safety. Specifically, this group sought to hear the stories and learn about the experiences of community members. They aimed to gather insight into how people connected to the public safety system, how the system responded to their needs, and how they were supported as they navigated through and exited the system.

The Reimagining Public Safety Community Work Group's role in leading this process was to learn about Olympia's public safety system, deeply listen to community members about their lived experiences, concerns, hopes, and dreams, and coalesce what they heard into a recommendation for the City Council.

The recommendations reflect what the Work Group heard from the community, what they learned from staff, and what they learned from one another's own lived experiences. Some actions point to bolstering or expanding existing programs and services, and others will take time to fully implement. There is not an assumption that all recommendations will be implemented overnight, and City Council, staff, and partner agencies may need to pursue further study, prioritization, and funding.

The final recommendations, including four guiding principles, five goals, 21 strategies, and numerous actions are supported, implemented, and reflected throughout the Public Safety chapter goals and policies.

## Fire Services Prevent Harm to People and Property

Olympia Fire Department vehicles.

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

The Department's approach to fire prevention and protection is outlined in the Fire Department Strategic Plan ⧉, which identifies the challenges facing the City and recommends specific solutions.

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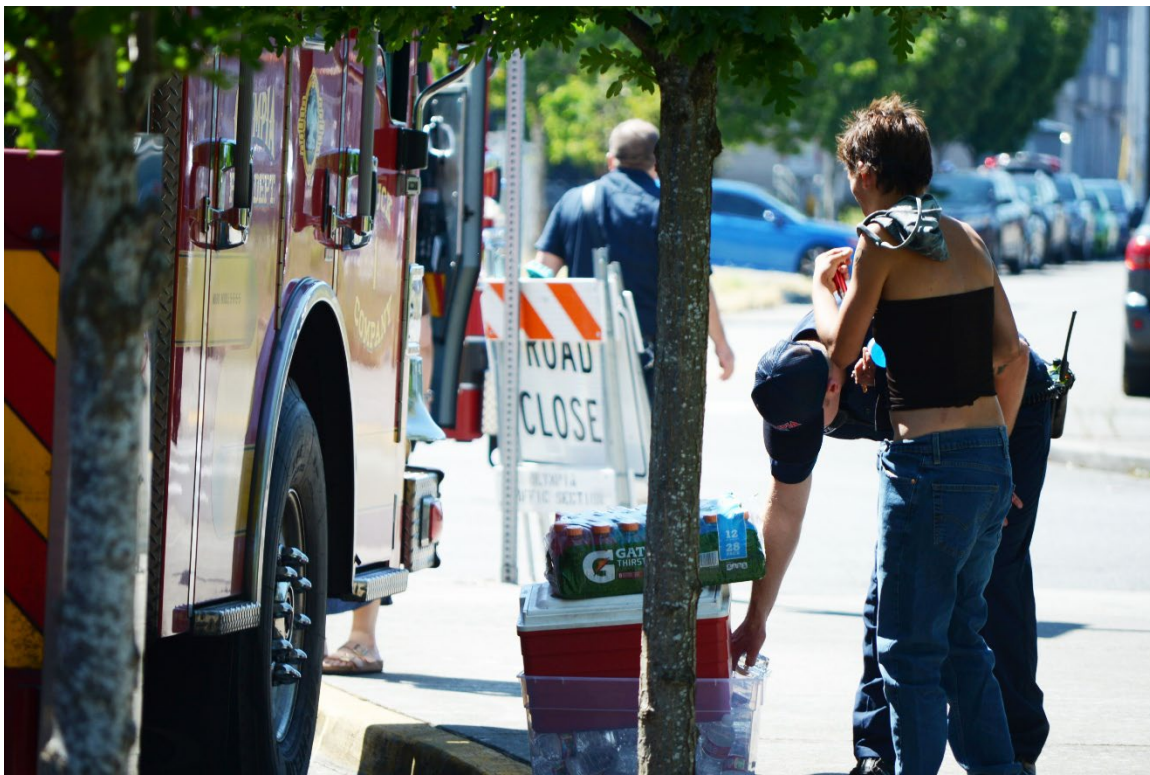
Olympia Fire personnel rendering assistance.

Goals and Policies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PS1.8 Develop performance measures and annually report on how the department's practices are working so they can be improved or refined.

PS1.9 Continue training and financial support for mutual aid partnerships with neighboring jurisdictions to ensure proper resources to fight wildfires regionally, while maintaining local levels of service (Climate).

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

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

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

PS2.3 Work with partners to gather best available information on the impact a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake would have on the community, including the potential magnitude, impacts of vertical movements and tsunamis, and how the Department might best prepare and respond.

PS2.4 Prioritize policies, programs, and initiatives that mitigate risks from the highest priority hazards identified in the Hazards Mitigation Plan for the Thurston Region and Olympia Annex and the Climate Risk and Vulnerability

Assessment (Climate).

PS2.5 Coordinate with regional partners to develop and implement extreme heat and wildfire smoke preparedness and response strategies. Prioritize actions and resources towards populations most vulnerable to extreme heat, wildfire, and smoke events (Climate).

PS2.6 Support existing and recruit new community centers and social service providers to act as resource hubs (also known as resilience hubs) during emergencies and climate-exacerbated hazards. Ensure these facilities have redundant infrastructure systems and are prepared with necessary resources to protect public health (Climate).

GS3 The community proactively provides emergency preparedness education and training to help prepare our community for catastrophic emergencies and respond to climate change (Climate).

PS3.1 Educate community members on how to sustain their households without outside assistance for a minimum of 72 hours during an emergency event, acknowledging that some events, such as a severe earthquake, may require them to sustain themselves for five to ten days or more. Work with community-based organizations and other partners to involve and reach diverse residents and neighborhoods in the education work (Climate).

PS3.2 Work with County partners to expand notification alerts to reduce exposure to climate-exacerbated hazards, including wildfire smoke, tidal flooding, and extreme heat. Encourage the community to sign up for notification alerts through education and outreach.

PS3.3 Prioritize emergency preparedness education, outreach, and resources for the highest-priority hazards and towards communities most vulnerable to climate-exacerbated hazards and emergencies.

PS3.4 Provide resources and alerts in the most common languages spoken in Thurston County to reach people with limited English proficiency.

GS4 Maintain a well-trained, resilient, safe, and sustainable organization.

PS4.1 Continue to provide a highly skilled and adequately staffed firefighting force to respond to fire, medical, and all other hazards to protect life and property.

PS4.2 Continue to ensure services are aligned with industry standards and community expectations.

PS4.3 Employ the most current standards for firefighter safety, command practices, training, and equipment maintenance.

PS4.4 Provide professional growth through development and opportunities for all employees. Explore more ways to help ensure public safety staff feel safe and supported when they are on- and off-duty.

PS4.5 Ensure strong retention by maintaining a positive organizational culture driven by shared values, employee recognition, and transparency.

PS4.6 Reduce 911 emergency response volumes through proactive public education and community assistance referrals.

PS4.7 Continue to build on regional partnerships and seek alternative funding sources that help reinforce and expand response capacities.

PS4.8 Factor climate-exacerbated hazards into the planning and coordination of emergency preparedness, response, and recovery among first responders and partners. Anticipate and modify staffing and resource needs before projected hazard events for effective and timely response (Climate).

PS4.9 Maintain capacity and staff time for emergency management, planning, and preparedness across the City (Climate).

PS4.10 Train emergency management professionals and adjacent service providers on trauma-informed care and mental health support for preparedness, response, and recovery in extreme weather emergency events and crises (Climate).

Olympia Fire and Police personnel participate in a Safe Sidewalks event.

Police Services Build Partnerships, Enhance Public Safety, and Contribute to Moving People Towards Wellness

The Olympia Police Department is the most visible part of the criminal justice system, but it is only one piece. The courts, prosecutors, and defense attorneys play key roles in carrying out the City's mission of balancing compassion with accountability. The Department is dedicated to building partnerships and exploring non-enforcement solutions to situations where entering someone into the criminal justice system is not in the best interests of the individual or the community. The Department continues to seek and expand alternative responses to situations that don't require law enforcement, while also holding chronic offenders accountable. Through its outreach services, including the Crisis Response Unit (CRU) and Familiar Faces, the Department can tailor its responses to people in crisis, enabling it to provide assistance that fits each situation. As a result, the Department can maximize the effectiveness of its resources and provide individuals with more of the help they need.

The Department continuously uses data to track its progress. Available crime data is used to guide the deployment of police resources, track the successes, and identify opportunities for improvement. Use of force incidents and arrest data are tracked, evaluated, critiqued, and ultimately reported to the council-appointed police auditor. This data is used to ensure the Department is aligned with community expectations and industry best practices.

Goals and Policies

GS5 Police services are delivered in a manner consistent with the values of the community.

PS5.1 Broadly and clearly communicate the Department's vision, mission, and values and make readily accessible the Department's strategic plan, priorities, policies, and accomplishments.

PS5.2 Deliver services in a professional, timely, and objective way.

PS5.3 Continuously seek to understand the makeup of the community's public safety values.

PS5.4 Interactions with the community will continue to focus on de-escalation and be aligned with community expectations.

PS5.5 Maintain transparency, accessibility, responsiveness, and a desire for ongoing community input.

PS5.6 Balance compassion and accountability; hold individuals responsible and accountable in a safe, relational, and equitable way.

PS5.7 Develop and maintain an accountable public safety system that is accessible, equitable, trusted by the community, and committed to continuous learning and improvement.

PS5.8 Ensure that Olympia's Community Policing Board, Civilian Police Auditor, and the Office of Professional Standards meet the interests of the community and act in accordance with current legislation and contemporary industry practices.

GS6 Community members are collaborators in identifying and solving community problems.

PS6.1 Communicate crime trends, prevention strategies, and enforcement data in an easy-to-understand and accessible way. Develop performance measures and annually report on how the program's enforcement practices are working so they can be improved or refined.

PS6.2 Continue to partner with individuals and groups in the community to identify challenges and possible solutions.

PS6.3 Regularly meet with and listen to community members to understand and respond to their needs.

PS6.4 Ensure the community has easy, reliable, clear, timely, and accessible access to Department and public safety information, including data-sharing, crime statistics, and Department programs and activities.

PS6.5 Strengthen community trust and relationships with the Department by hosting or attending regular events, activities, and other non-enforcement related engagement opportunities.

PS6.6 Continually evaluate police policies, training, and operational standards to adapt and integrate contemporary and best practices.

PS6.7 Recruit community volunteers and use their strengths and talents to enhance the Department's effectiveness.

PS6.8 Build authentic relationships with marginalized community groups to enhance trust, communication, reporting, and collaboration in problem-solving.

PS6.9 Communicate about critical incidents in transparent, timely, and accessible ways.

Olympia Police instructs participants of the Olympia Police Youth Academy.

GS7 The Department is appropriately staffed and equipped to provide a high level of service for the community.

PS7.1 Periodically review staffing levels to ensure adequate coverage for emergency responses, while allowing Department members to connect with the community in non-enforcement ways.

PS7.2 Develop alternate ways to respond to calls for service where armed officers are not required.

PS7.3 Continue to evaluate and expand the use of unarmed responders to assist community members who are in crisis and where there may not be a need for a law enforcement response.

PS7.4 Focus on the quality of service provided to community members with non-emergency calls, and not merely the speed of response.

PS7.5 Use publicly accessible satellite stations to improve community member access to and interaction with the Department.

PS7.6 Develop a real-time crime analysis center with regional partners and use data to better identify and address trends.

PS7.7 Continuously monitor trends in illegal activity and identify strategies to reduce or more effectively prevent crimes. Ensure that external partners contributing to police workload share in the responsibility for managing and supporting appropriate crime prevention strategies.

PS7.8 Continue to explore the use of technology to continuously improve and realize efficiencies in Department

services and processes.

PS7.9 Provide specialized police units and services important to maintaining Olympia's quality of life. This should include, but is not limited to, traffic patrol and both resource officers and civilian crisis responders available to schools in Olympia.

PS7.10 Maintain a strong commitment to public safety and the prioritization of the quality of life in downtown through the appropriate staffing and continued deployment of walking patrol police officers and crisis response unit staff.

PS7.11 Ensure regular communication and collaboration between the Police Department and other City departments.

GS8 The effectiveness of police services is maximized through collaboration with other departments, agencies, and providers.

PS8.1 Ensure continuous crisis intervention training for officers and collaborate with mental health professionals to address social rather than criminal problems.

PS8.2 Increase the availability of crisis intervention teams and unarmed responders to handle incidents involving mental health.

PS8.3 Continue to grow the Department's collaborative partnerships with community-based non-profit and social service organizations to help address individuals' support needs before and after arrest to reduce recidivism.

PS8.4 Work with the courts and prosecutors to find alternatives to jail, such as dispute resolution, substance abuse treatment, and other strategies that address underlying problems.

PS8.5 Continuously improve cooperation and communication among police, prosecutors, public defenders, judges, and corrections agencies. Collaborate on process improvements that enhance effectiveness and ease navigation of the public safety system for community members.

PS8.6 Explore regionalization of certain administrative duties, such as evidence and property management, police records, and shared use of technology solutions.

PS8.7 Continue to engage in conversations with the Olympia School District regarding School Resource Officers at area schools.

Olympia Crisis Response Unit personnel working with a member of the community.

GS9 The Department maintains a strong workplace culture with compassionate and dedicated public servants.

PS9.1 Through recruitment and hiring practices, strive to reflect the community within the composition of the Police Department.

PS9.2 Continue to invest in training and professional development opportunities that maintain employee safety and wellness.

PS9.3 Maintain strong internal communications and engagement to support a culture of trust, knowledge, and

accountability.

PS9.4 Provide employees with a path for promotion and professional growth through training, specialty assignments, and succession planning.

PS9.5 Explore more ways to help ensure public safety staff feel safe and supported when they are on- and off-duty.

> **GS10 Adopt and maintain a Comprehensive Crowd Management Policy that provides clear guidance to officers, supervisors, commanders, and participating first responders and mutual aid partners regarding the employment of appropriate crowd management and public safety strategies.**

PS10.1 Adopt a Public Assembly and Crowd Management Statement of Purpose that declares the Department's commitment to support and facilitate the exercise of First Amendment rights fairly and equitably, without consideration as to content or political affiliation, with as minimal interference with such activities as is reasonably necessary to preserve public safety and order.

PS10.2 Establish formal communication protocols that consistently inform the community of its actions, including publishing After Action Reports and engagement with community members and business owners who are adversely affected by events.

PS10.3 Require that all OPD officers, supervisors, commanders, and community partners (such as Olympia Fire Department Medics) who assist with crowd management receive training on First Amendment rights, procedural justice, and crowd-specific de-escalation skills.

Code Enforcement Preserves Community Livability

Code Enforcement is a City program that allows community members and others to report violations of city code relating to health, safety, and welfare on private and public property. The Code Enforcement program investigates and seeks to remedy a variety of concerns, including complaints about environmental noise, trash, graffiti, inoperable vehicles, outdoor storage of materials, land use, impact or obstruction to public infrastructure, dangerous buildings, unauthorized encampments, and other community safety and livability concerns. Code Enforcement collaborates with Olympia's building, current planning and engineering, urban forestry, housing and homeless response programs, and the Police, Fire, Public Works, Parks, Arts and Recreation and Legal Departments to resolve cases and coordinates with other community entities on education and prevention activities.

Goals and Policies

> **GS11 The City provides consistent resolution of code complaints and violations, emphasizing voluntary compliance to minimize punitive actions.**

PS11.1 Prioritize education and voluntary compliance; use penalties only when necessary to protect health, safety, and welfare.

PS11.2 Support timely compliance by providing clear expectations, technical assistance, and referrals to community resources.

PS11.3 Educate neighborhoods and engage with community organizations about code enforcement to strengthen trust and understanding.

Olympia Code Enforcement responds to a graffiti complaint.

GS12 Complaints, responses, and resolutions are tracked and reported consistently.

PS12.1 Provide community members who submit complaints with timely information on current code enforcement activities.

PS12.2 Develop performance measures, maintain a public dashboard on geographic distribution of cases, and annually report on how the program's enforcement practices are working, including time to abatement, so they can be improved or refined.

PS12.3 Adhere to a consistent process which is predictable and easy for complainants and violators to follow.

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