



# OLYMPIA

Natural Environment

2045

Utility Advisory Committee 2/6/25



# Agenda

- Natural Environment chapter overview
- Review chapter update process
- Discuss key themes & edits
- Discussion

Photo: Aerial view of downtown Olympia and the 4<sup>th</sup> avenue bridge





# The Natural Environment Chapter:

- Environmental Justice
- Habitat stewardship
- Puget Sound & salmon recovery, Tribal treaty rights
- Critical areas protection
- Managing pollution
- Connecting people to nature
- Balancing human and environmental well-being
- Climate resilience and adaptation

Photo: A group of children planting trees at Grass Lake Nature Park





# Update Process

New requirements from the State Legislature

Emerging trends & new research

Community & stakeholder input

Interdepartmental staff input

**Draft Chapter Updates**

Photo: A row of oak trees along a grassy strip separates the street from the sidewalk



# Timeline

- **Spring:** Begin community engagement – tabling events
- **Summer:** Public open house workshops and e-survey
- **Fall:** targeted outreach (agencies, organizations, Squaxin Island Tribe)

- **Winter:** First draft of revisions out for review
- **Spring:** Advisory committees & commissions initial briefing
- **Fall:** Second draft of revisions out for review

- **In Progress:**
  - Integrating City Council recommendations
  - Integrating Climate Element (resilience & adaptation) policies

2023

2024

2025





# What's new since 2014?

- Rapid population growth & increased development
- New climate research
- Data describing the social, economic & public health benefits of urban natural areas
- Updated “green infrastructure” technology
- Increased awareness of environmental justice issues

Photo: A snag provides habitat next to a wetland at Yauger Park<sup>6</sup>



# Public Input & Stakeholder Priorities

## What We Heard – Most Common Topics:



- Prioritize multi-benefit, **nature-based solutions** to challenges in the built environment
- Impact of **encampments** on critical areas
- **Pollution** (including noise and light), water quality, clean air
- Protect and expand **tree canopy**
- Impact of sprawl: **development**, construction, transportation systems
- **Climate** change, particularly sea-level rise, urban heat islands, and water conservation
- Safe and **accessible greenspaces**
- Healthy habitat for **wildlife** populations

Photo: Comprehensive Plan outreach materials on a picnic table during an event

# Natural Environment Priorities

## Survey results – Public Prioritization of Environmental Topics

↑ Highest Priority  
↓ Lowest Priority

How do you feel the City should prioritize the following areas over the next 10-20 years?  
(1 = most important, 8 = least important)

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



# Public Input & Stakeholder Priorities

## Specific Recommendations:



### **Squaxin Island Tribe**

- Elevate salmon recovery efforts
- Prioritize green stormwater infrastructure

### **Olympia Planning Commission**

- Encourage more septic system inspection and maintenance
- Promote infill development and redevelopment on already urbanized areas and impervious surfaces, before developing forested and natural lands

### **Social Justice & Equity Commission**

- Discussion held; no specific edits requested
- Overall process and proposed edits well-received

Photo: Comprehensive Plan outreach materials on a picnic table during an event

# Public Input & Stakeholder Priorities

## Specific Recommendations:



### **Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee**

- Clarify use of term “community”
- Refine language regarding encampments in critical areas
- Better define the term “urban forest”

### **Land Use & Environment**

(City Council Subcommittee)

- Minor edits re: balancing sustainable growth with environmental protection

### **Utility Advisory Committee**

- Early discussion held Feb 2024

Photo: Comprehensive Plan outreach materials on a picnic table during an event



# Discussion





## Contact info

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