

# What is Sustainable Thurston?

**S**ustainable Thurston is a community conversation that will result in a vision for a vibrant, healthy, and resilient future, as well as the actions and responsibilities to achieve it. The Plan — *Creating Places — Preserving Spaces: A Sustainable Development Plan for the Thurston Region* — is the result of a two-and-a-half-year community conversation and analysis of quality-of-life issues. This Plan charts a more sustainable future for the Thurston Region.

*What is our definition of Sustainability for the Thurston Region?*

*A sustainable community will enhance quality of life, foster economic vitality, and protect the environment while balancing our needs today with those of future residents.*

## What are the challenges that Sustainable Thurston addresses?

**Achieving our land-use visions:** Over the last 20 years, existing plans have not resulted in our community visions for vibrant city and town centers and much less sprawl. Using the best information available, Sustainable Thurston models show that unless we change our existing land-use plans, by 2035 we can anticipate:

- Difficulty creating vital city/town economic centers.
- Losing 32 percent of farmlands to urbanization — some 15,600 acres.
- Losing 10 percent of forest lands to urbanization — around 19,300 acres.
- Sending 13 percent of growth into the rural areas, contributing to the loss of forestlands, farmlands, and prairies.
- Suburban and rural low-density growth patterns that are costly and difficult to serve with infrastructure and services, putting strain on already limited resources.

**Protecting our natural environment,** including:

- Wise use of water to meet the needs of people and the environment today and in the future.
- Energy conservation that will meet state vehicle-miles-traveled and emissions-reduction targets.

**Planning for a growing and changing population and meeting the needs of an aging population**

- Thurston County's population is currently around 258,000. We're projecting an increase of around 120,000 additional people by 2035.
- About 12 percent of our population today is age 65 or older. By 2035, 19 percent of the population will be age 65 or older.

**Maintaining a strong and resilient economy**

**Improving health outcomes** by overcoming concerns that result in poor health and strain household and community health system budgets.



## What are our region's opportunities?

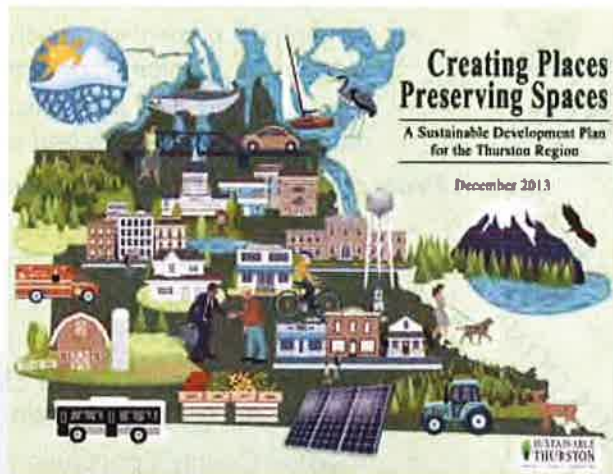
- Shaping the future — This is a rare opportunity for residents and policymakers alike to have a voice in how we want our community to look, function and feel.
- Revitalizing hopes — The Great Recession shows us that efficiency, collaboration and cooperation are key to a robust economy, a healthy environment, and resilient communities and households.



## What does the sustainability plan include?

To realize the bold vision, *Creating Places—Preserving Spaces* sets 12 Priority Goals and Targets and recommends roughly 375 actions across a broad array of topics, including Sustainable Economy, Water Quality and Infrastructure, Air Quality, Food Systems, Transportation, Energy, Housing, Public Safety, and Health & Human Services. Achieving the goals and hitting the targets would result in measurable outcomes:

- 95 percent of growth in areas designated for urban growth
- \$1.6 billion savings in road, water, sewer, and other related infrastructure costs
- 43 percent of the population living within a quarter-mile of transit service
- 72 percent of urban households living within a half-mile of goods and services
- 33 percent reduction in land consumption
- No net loss of forestlands
- No net loss of rural farmlands
- 34 percent reduction in new impervious area in protected stream basins
- 31 percent reduction in new impervious area in sensitive stream basins



## What is our region's sustainability vision?

The Sustainable Thurston vision statement (below) — which was shaped by residents' ideas and drafted by a task force of community leaders — articulates the region's values and expectations.

*In one generation — through innovation and leadership — the Thurston Region will become a model for sustainability and livability. We will consume less energy, water, and land, produce less waste, and achieve carbon neutrality. We will lead in doing more while consuming less. Through efficiency, coupled with strategic investments, we will support a robust economy. Our actions will enhance an excellent education system, and foster a healthy, inclusive, and equitable social environment that remains affordable and livable. We will view every decision at the local and regional level through the sustainability lens. We will think in generations, not years. The region will work together toward common goals, putting people in the center of our thinking, and inspire individual responsibility and leadership in our residents.*



## What are the next steps?

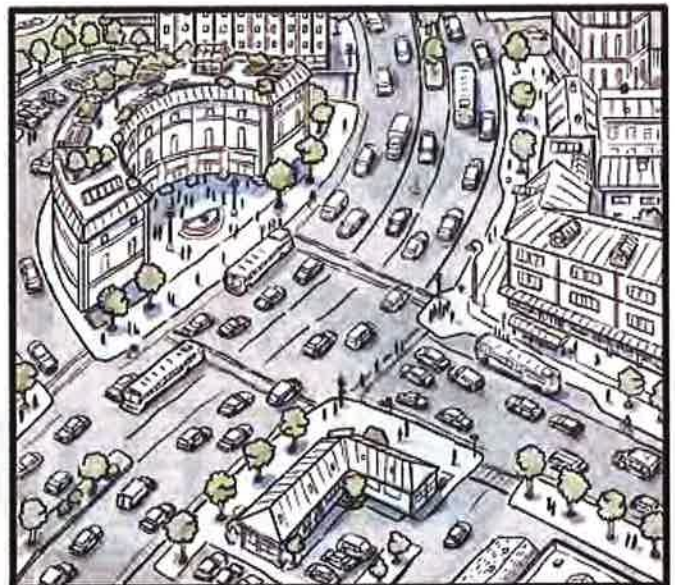
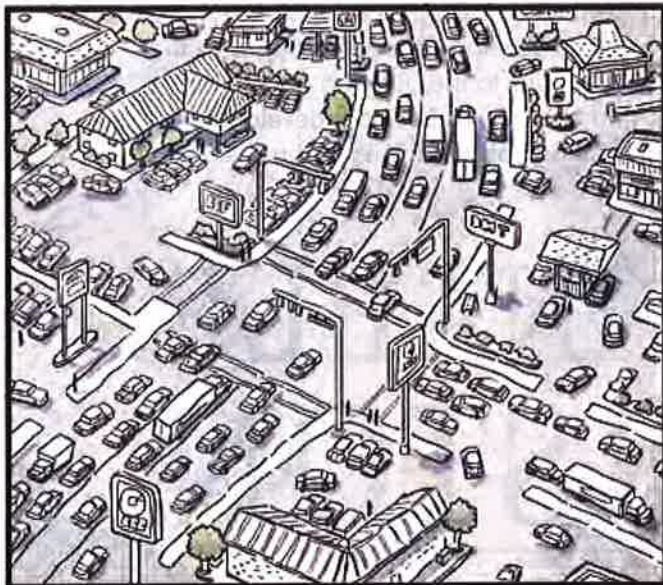
- Publication of the *Creating Places—Preserving Spaces* marks the beginning of what will need to be an ongoing community conversation.
- Implementation will occur at the local level with jurisdictions identifying program and process actions to take based on their priorities.
- Regional, non-profit and private partners will also continue to play an important role. They will facilitate ongoing discussion, monitor, lead and support actions that move the region toward sustainability goals.

## What sustainability work is already taking place?

The Sustainable Thurston project is already helping catalyze and support community health, economic development, land-use and transportation projects around the region. New and innovative projects that incorporate actions and concepts consistent with those in *Creating Places — Preserving Spaces* include:

**Urban Corridor Communities** — The Sustainable Thurston project had been underway for less than a year when TRPC received a follow-up grant to develop a comprehensive corridor strategy and plans for three districts along the region's main arterials. The projects include:

- Lacey is working to transform its Woodland District, near City Hall and St. Martin's University, into a mixed-use area with affordable residential, office, retail, services, and parks supported by safe streets that encourage walking.
- Tumwater is working to revitalize its Brewery District — an area that includes the former Olympia Brewery — by supporting the creation of a walkable neighborhood with new and remodeled commercial and residential buildings.
- Olympia is working on an infrastructure strategy — such as sidewalks, bicycle lanes, pedestrian crossings, and stormwater infrastructure — along an aging stretch of Martin Way, a major transit route between the Lacey and Olympia city centers.



**STEDI** — The South Thurston Economic Development Initiative (STEDI) seeks to promote community and economic development in the South County communities of Bucoda, Rainier, Tenino, Yelm, Grand Mound and Rochester. Key efforts of the initiative include analyzing existing economic conditions in the communities, offering resources to support new and existing businesses, and identifying methods to better tell the story of the opportunities available in South Thurston County.

**Agritourism** — In 2012, Thurston County adopted what's known as the Agritourism Overlay District (AOD) Ordinance, which is designed to reduce regulatory barriers, streamline permitting, and help guide and develop new agritourism operations. The ordinance — which covers activities including farmers' markets, overnight farm stays, farm stores and bakeries, country inns, wineries, and breweries — encompasses about 40 percent of the non-forestry-zoned acreage in Thurston County, primarily in the south. To learn more, visit [www.co.thurston.wa.us/permitting/agriculture/agriculture-tourism.html](http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/permitting/agriculture/agriculture-tourism.html).

**Main Street 507** — State Route 507 travels through South Thurston County and forms the "Main Street" of Bucoda, Rainier and Tenino. In late 2013, the Thurston Regional Planning Council and its partners began a project to improve the route's look, feel and function as it travels through the downtowns. As part of the project, residents and business owners are exploring methods to enhance the pedestrian access, comfort and safety of the Main Streets, while improving vehicle traffic flow, in an effort to make the downtowns more economically resilient and vibrant.

**Thurston Thrives** — In early 2013, the Thurston County Board of Health launched the Thurston Thrives initiative to improve the health of residents around the region through collaborative partnerships and community engagement that address key factors in community health outcomes. The strategy development and action planning of Thurston Thrives is being carried out by nine action teams organized around the following issues: water, air, disease carriers, and the physical environment; food systems; housing; education; economy and income; community design; youth development and resilience; clinical prevention, medical and behavioral treatment; and, community resilience. The Board of Health and a new community advisory council will consider each team's recommendations and shape a final action agenda. Visit [www.ThurstonThrives.org](http://www.ThurstonThrives.org) for more information.

**Entrepreneurial Center** — South Puget Sound Community College (SPSCC) and the Thurston Economic Development Council (EDC) are working to establish an entrepreneurial and innovation center at the future Rowe Six campus of SPSCC on Sixth Avenue in downtown Lacey. SPSCC plans to move its Hawks Prairie campus to Rowe Six, as well as develop academic programs that would support the center. The EDC will provide high-value services to the business community, including business counseling, government contracting, and a variety of business-development resources to continue efforts to recruit, retain, and expand market opportunities for businesses and entrepreneurs throughout the region.



# SUSTAINABLE THURSTON

connect • create • communicate