

Foreword

The City of Olympia adopted its first Comprehensive Plan over fifty years ago. Although for a time, Washington's Planning Enabling Act only required that land use and transportation issues be included, Olympia's plans have also addressed other topics such as parks, schools, utilities and the local economy. In 1990, the State's Growth Management Act (GMA) directed Olympia's plan, and those of other growing cities and counties, to address statewide goals and include specific 'elements'. The table below shows where the elements required by the GMA are addressed in this Comprehensive Plan.

This Comprehensive Plan reflects a major update which was completed in 2014. It accommodates changes since the 1994 Comprehensive Plan was adopted and the changes projected over the next 20 years. Over 1,500 community members participated. Under the GMA the City may amend the Plan annually, as well as complete a major periodic update every 8 years.

Olympia's Comprehensive Plan is composed of two volumes, the first of which includes ten chapters. The second volume is the capital facilities element, including a 6-year plan for capital projects that is updated annually. The plan is an integrated single plan and should be read as a whole because topics are interrelated. It is composed of two volumes, the first of which includes ten chapters. Specific topics often are related to many or all chapters, but are yet are typically addressed within a single chapter to avoid repetition. Thus, these chapters are only for organizing the plan's content. They do not reflect the structure of the City's government or any particular model of city planning.

~~Following is a table that summarizes the contents of each chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.~~ The ~~Growth Management Act (GMA)~~ establishes required elements that must be contained in all Comprehensive Plans. In the Growth Management statute these mandatory elements are listed under RCW 36.70A.070 in the following order:

1. Land Use
2. Housing
3. Capital Facilities
4. Utilities
5. Rural element for non-urban lands
6. Transportation
7. Economic development¹

8. Parks and recreation¹

Following is a table that summarizes the contents of each chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. Listed on the far right of the table below are the GMA-mandated element(s), ~~which that~~ are addressed in each of the Comprehensive Plan Chapters. In some cases, additional GMA requirements are noted as being addressed in Comprehensive Plan Chapters. If you are interested in a more detailed crosswalk between the City’s Comprehensive Plan and the mandatory GMA elements, a “GMA Checklist” has been completed and can be provided to you upon request.

Comprehensive Plan Chapter	Description	GMA-Required Elements Addressed
Volume 1:		
Introduction	Overview of the Plan and its setting ²	N/A
Community Values & Vision	Summary of the foundations of the Plan	<u>N/A Include a vision for the community at the end of the 20-year planning period; identify community values derived from citizen participation processes.</u>
Public Participation and Partners	Description of the relationship between the City government and others who implement the Plan	Not a formal GMA element; does meet requirements of RCW 36.70A.035, 36.70A.130 and 36.70A.140
Natural Environment	Focused on elements of the community’s environment that were not built by people; it includes the City’s shoreline goals and policies, and addresses means of reducing land use impacts on the natural environment – such as urban forestry	Land Use; also addresses requirements of RCW 36.70A.170 and .172
Land Use and Urban Design	Addresses the pattern and form of land uses addressing the pattern and form of land uses like housing, businesses and industry and how to ensure compatibility, blending and adequate space for each (a GMA-requirement). This chapter encompasses topics like landscaping and architectural design, preservation and appreciation of historic resources. It also addresses the pattern and form of land uses, housing, businesses and industry, and how to ensure compatibility, blending and adequate space for each. This chapter encompasses topics like landscaping	Land Use (multiple elements); Housing (elements a-d); Transportation element 6(a)(i)

Comprehensive Plan Chapter	Description	GMA-Required Elements Addressed
	and architectural design, preservation and appreciation of historic resources, and more detailed planning for specific areas of the community.	
Transportation	Addresses all aspects of mobility including cars, buses, trucks, trains, bikes and walking	Transportation (all required elements)
Utilities	Overview of plans for both private and public utilities (such as water, sewer, solid waste, and electricity) and their use of land; details regarding utilities are often included in separate "Master Plans"	Land Use (protection of drinking water, drainage, flooding and stormwater runoff); Utilities (multiple elements)
Public Health, Arts, Parks and Recreation	Addresses the use of land for parks and open space and community activities such as recreation, the arts, and other aspects of mental and physical well-being	Parks and recreation elements a-c
Economy	Description of Olympia's approach to local investment, business and jobs within the context of the global economy	Economy elements a-c
Public Services	Addresses services provided by the public sector, such as housing and other social service programs, schools, and police and fire protection; along with the land needed for those services	Land Use; Transportation; Housing
Volume 2		
Capital Facilities	The Capital Facilities Plan includes 20-year goals and policies, along with is a 6-year plan that is updated annually, and can be found on the City's website	Capital Facilities (elements a-e)

¹Economic Development and Parks and Recreation elements are required only if the state legislature provides funding (RCW 36.07A.070(9))

²When updated in 1994 and in 2014, respectively, an environmental impact statement (EIS) and a supplement EIS were prepared. Those documents provide more extensive background information regarding the state of the community at those points in time.

[More information about how to use this document is included in the Introduction Chapter.](#)

Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan



View of the Capitol Building from Heritage Park Fountain

[[Photo: ViewofCapitolBuildingfromHeritagePark.jpg align=right caption=View of the Capitol Building from Heritage Park Fountain]]

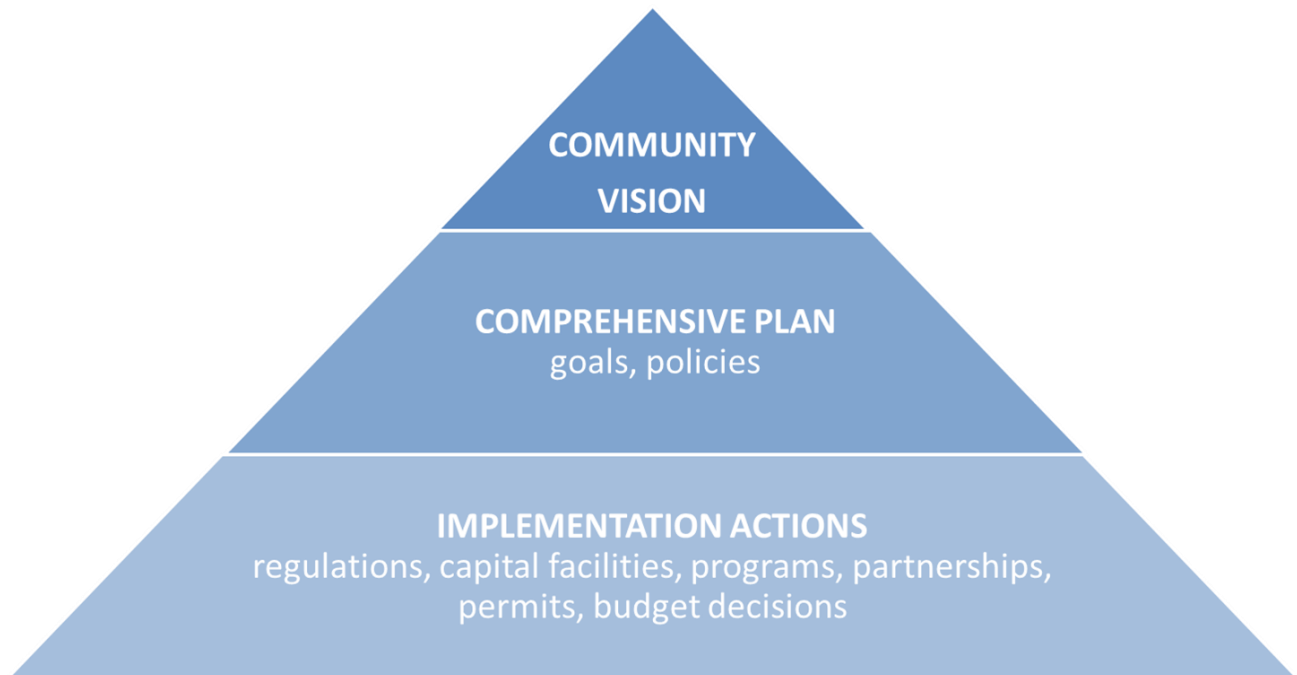
The City of Olympia's Comprehensive Plan builds upon our community's values and our vision for the future. ~~The A-set of~~ goals and policies in this document provides high-level ~~more detailed~~ direction for actions the City and other community members may take the to realization of these values and vision. Goals and policies (including maps) also guide City budgets, master plans, development regulations and other decisions. In turn, these serve as the framework upon which City regulations, programs and other plans are formed.

As many as 20,000 additional people are expected to join our community over the next two decades. This Plan is our strategy for maintaining and enhancing our high quality of life and environment while accommodating expected growth. Most readily-buildable parcels in the City are already developed to some degree. Thus, over the next 20 years, we expect to see more infill and redevelopment of existing developed areas. This presents our community with opportunities to restore degraded environments, create vibrant pockets of social and economic activity, and target investments to make more efficient use of and improve existing infrastructure. ~~both the changes since the 1994 Comprehensive Plan was adopted and the changes projected over the next 20 years.~~

The Comprehensive Plan is not just a plan for city government. Developed out of input from thousands of people in our community at different times over decades, the Comprehensive Plan truly is the community's plan. Many ~~of the~~ goals and policies ~~listed~~ call for coordination and collaboration among individual citizens, neighborhoods and civic groups, and City government. As always, there

will be challenges and change, but the intent is to build on the creativity and strength of our community to shape how we develop.

[[Add Illustration]]



[[Illustration: Pyramid, Align=center, Caption=The Comprehensive Plan is based on community vision, and guides City and other community actions, such as regulations, programs and budgets. ADA background information=Pyramid depicting the hierarchy of community vision at the top, followed by the Comprehensive Plan goals and policies in the middle, and implementation actions, including the examples: regulations, capital facilities, programs, partnerships, permits and budget decisions at the bottom.]]

How to Use this Document

Chapters

This Comprehensive Plan is separated into two volumes: the first with eleven ten chapters, and the second volume, which is the capital facilities plan:

Volume I:

1. Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan;
2. Community Values & Vision

3. Public Participation and Partners;
4. Natural Environment;
5. Land Use and Urban Design;
6. Transportation;
7. Utilities;
8. Economy;
9. Public Health, Arts, Parks and Recreation; and
10. Public Services; ~~and.~~
- ~~11. Capital Facilities~~

Volume II: Capital Facilities:

There are many issues that connect these chapters. For example:

- The Land Use Chapter, in conjunction with Public Participation & Partners, Natural Environment, Transportation, Parks, Utilities, Economy and Capital Facilities, all provide basic policy guidance for City land use regulations outlined in City codes. They describe generally where various types of land uses should occur, how intense they may be and how designed; types and locations of environmentally sensitive areas to be protected; and the general types of transportation, utility and park facilities that are planned, including locations for major facilities. More specifically:
 - ~~P~~Policies related to trees exist in the Natural Environment chapter as well as under [Land Use and Urban Design](#), Transportation, Utilities and even Economy.
 - ~~L~~ikewise, ~~P~~Policies related to walk-ability are included under both [Land Use and Urban Design](#) and Transportation.
- Various chapters include policies that influence City services, including fire, police, affordable housing, arts, recreation, volunteer services and overall public engagement in civic affairs.

If viewing an electronic version, use the 'search' function to find all of the policies related to specific topics.

Goals and Policies

The goals in this Plan ~~identify what are the end states~~ we hope to achieve as a community. ~~some~~ Some goals will take longer than others to realize. Policies describe how the City will act in a broad sense to achieve these goals.

At times, goals or policies may seem to be in conflict with each other. For example, a goal to increase density may seem to be in conflict with a goal to preserve open space. Or a goal to increase tree canopy may seem to be in conflict with a goal to increase solar energy access. Over the next 20 years, the complex challenges and opportunities we face as a community will often require us to strike a balance between different goals and policies to provide the best outcome for the community as a whole. Thus individual goals and policies should always be considered within the context of the entire Plan.

Throughout each and every year, City officials, along with the public, make a range of decisions about how community resources will be used and managed, and how both public and private development will occur. Community plans and programs often result from conscientious balancing among divergent interests based on the facts and context of a particular situation and on the entire set of Comprehensive Plan goals. Balancing these goals in a way that provides the best overall community benefit requires careful consideration, based on an understanding of multiple community objectives, the specific context and potential impacts.

This type of strategic decision-making can often lead to a selection of options that realize multiple goals. For example, when we protect the quality of our air and water, we improve our health and attract long-term investment in our City.

~~The complex challenges and opportunities we face as a community often require us to strike a balance between different goals and policies to provide the best outcome for the community as a whole. Thus, individual goals and policies should always be considered within the context of the entire Plan.~~

~~There may be a period of time after the City Council adopts changes to the Plan before staff, the public and policy makers are able to take action to implement it. The City will make every effort to quickly and reasonably develop, review and adopt any new or revised regulations to conform to this Plan.~~

~~[[Change: In addition to updating the Comprehensive Plan, the City Council directed preparation of an 'Action Plan' to guide implementation of the Plan. The section below describes that yet-to-be-drafted document.]]~~

Implementation

~~This update to the Comprehensive Plan does not include specific actions or measurements. A companion document to the Plan is an "action plan" or "implementation strategy" that includes specific timeframes and actions for implementing the Plan. This strategy will establish priorities, set responsibility and determine how we will measure progress toward our goals. This is also an important tool for communicating and tracking what the City and Olympia residents are doing to help our community achieve its vision.~~

~~The City looks for partners from all sectors of the community: residents, businesses, developers, non-profits, the faith community, schools, neighborhood associations, other government agencies and organizations to help implement the Comprehensive Plan. Partnerships will help our community work together to realize our common vision.~~

~~There are many different types of actions that could be taken to implement this Plan. Some elements in the Plan are implemented through the development code and Engineering Design and Development Standards (EDDS), which, along with other government actions must be consistent with the Plan under state law. Other elements in the Plan depend heavily or exclusively on community involvement.~~



Beautiful sunshine display at Procession of the Species.

[[Photo: SunshineDisplayProcessionofSpecies.jpg align=right caption=Beautiful sunshine display at Procession of the Species.]]

[[Change: In addition to updating the Comprehensive Plan, the City Council directed preparation of an 'Action Plan' to guide implementation of the Plan. The section below describes that yet-to-be-drafted document.]]

Implementation – The Action Plan

This Comprehensive Plan does not include specific actions or measurements. A companion document to the Plan is an "action plan" or "implementation strategy" that will take the community's vision and goals as defined in the Comprehensive Plan, and lay out a path by which we can achieve them. Actions may take a variety of forms ranging from large construction projects to the creation of new guiding documents and plans.

The Action Plan will also be heavily focused on tracking our effectiveness and demonstrating success. A set of performance measures will show where we began and where we currently are in relation to our desired outcomes, with results reported back to the community. The action plan will be updated annually or biannually through a collaborative community process.

The City looks for partners from all sectors of the community to help implement the Comprehensive Plan through the Action Plan. Partners may include residents, businesses, developers, non-profits, the faith community, schools, neighborhood associations, other government agencies and organizations. Partnerships will help our community work together to realize our common vision.

The Local Planning & Development Process

Local planning depends heavily on community involvement. Public engagement is essential for many reasons, including that it provides for more holistic perspectives on City decisions that affect the entire community and it protects citizens' rights to influence public policy. In fact, the Growth Management Act calls for broad public involvement in creating and amending Comprehensive Plans and implementing development regulations.

Local planning is a phased process that also operates within a framework of federal, state, county and laws. Our local codes and other decisions must be consistent with these laws, in addition to Comprehensive Plan goals and policies. For example, both the U.S. and Washington State Constitutions include private property rights that must be respected by local government agencies.

Once a Comprehensive Plan is adopted, it may be amended annually, with larger updates considered every 8 years. There may be a period of time after the City Council adopts changes to the Plan before staff, the public and policy makers are able to take action to implement it. The City will make every effort to quickly and reasonably develop, review and adopt any new or revised regulations to conform to this Plan.

Development codes to implement the Plan may be amended at any time during the year, but only following a public process guided by both state and local standards. The City Council makes final decisions on plan and code amendments. Typically, the Olympia Planning Commission holds a public hearing and makes a recommendation to the City Council on amendments to the Comprehensive Plan or implementing development codes.

There are further opportunities for the public to provide input and influence site-specific permitting decisions; however public influence may be more constrained at this stage. This is because site specific permit decisions are largely based on

[whether or not proposals are consistent with established local codes and other laws.](#)

[See the Public Participation & Partners Chapter for more information on how to get involved.](#)

Context for the Comprehensive Plan

In the early 1990s, the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) was passed in response to rapid and sprawling growth in many parts of the state that was causing a decrease in quality of life, negative effects on the environment, and increased costs for municipal infrastructure and maintenance. Revision of our Comprehensive Plan was a requirement for Olympia under GMA and Olympia adopted a revised Comprehensive Plan under the Act in 1994.

The Act requires most urban counties and cities in the state to prepare comprehensive plans to address how they will manage expected growth. It directs urban areas, like Olympia, to absorb more of the state's population growth than rural areas, thereby preserving forests, animal habitat, farmland, and other important lands. Focusing growth in urban areas also reduces traffic, pollution, and the costs of providing city services that protect the health, safety and quality of life of citizens.

The Act defines [13 goals](#), plus a [shoreline goal](#) to guide the development and adoption of comprehensive plans. These focus on "smart growth" principles that maximize use of land and existing utilities, protect historic and natural resources, and lower traffic and housing costs. Fortunately, Olympia has been taking this approach for a long time.

Olympia has long understood the merits of planning for the future and had a Comprehensive Plan as early as 1959.


In many ways, our earlier plans created the community we have today. For example, during community outreach for the 1994 plan, citizens expressed a desire for Olympia to become a "City of Trees." In response, the community developed several goals and policies to guide a new Olympia Urban Forestry Program. Since then, we've planted thousands of street trees, and been consistently recognized by the National Arbor Day Foundation as a Tree City USA.




Community members planting trees at the 1000 Trees in One Day event on March 28, 2008.

[[Photo: CommunityMembersPlantingTrees.jpg align=right caption=Community members planting trees at the 1000 Trees in One Day event on March 28, 2008.]]

A Changing Community

[[Change: The population and employment forecasts below are based on data from the [2014 Thurston Regional Planning Council Buildable Lands Report](#) . Forecasts based on the 2010 Census were issued in 2012 and 2013 after this draft Plan was prepared.]]

Since the 1970s, the population and economy of the Puget Sound region has been growing. According to the [Thurston County Profile](#) , the county's population more than doubled between 1980 and 2010. Forecasters expect Olympia's population and employment will continue to increase over the next 20 years. In 2010, the estimated population of Olympia and its Urban Growth Area was 58,310 residents. Forecasters expect our population will increase to 84,400 by 2035, a rate of approximately 2% per year. A majority of this increase will be due to in-migration. People are attracted to living here because we have a relatively stable economy, a beautiful environment, friendly and safe neighborhoods, good schools and lower living costs than our neighbors to the

Preserving our Sense of Place and Connections

The City embraces our Comprehensive Plan as an opportunity to enhance the things Olympians care about. As we grow and face change, Olympians want to preserve the unique qualities and familiarity of our community. We draw a sense of place from the special features of our city: walk-able neighborhoods, historic buildings, views of the mountains, Capitol and Puget Sound, and our connected social fabric. These features help us identify with our community, enrich us, and make us want to invest here socially, economically and emotionally.

During development of this Plan, many people expressed a desire to maintain a "small town feel." Olympians want to feel connected to each other and to our built and natural environment. We want to live in a friendly and safe community where we know our neighbors and shopkeepers, and run into friends along the sidewalk. We value harmony with nature, thriving small businesses, places to gather and celebrate, and an inclusive local government.

Olympians expressed that they are willing to accept growth as long as our environment and sense of place is preserved. That means protecting the places and culture that we recognize as "Olympia," even if those things are a little different for each of us. It also means focusing on our community values and vision as we grow.

Sea Level Rise

Over the next twenty years, sea level rise will continue to be a key challenge facing Olympia, and therefore a key priority. Olympia has recognized its vulnerability and has been preparing for sea level rise since 1990, long before many recognized it as a major threat to waterfront communities. The City has consistently made it a priority to track the continuing evolution of science in this arena, and apply those findings to Olympia.

Scientific information regarding climate change and sea level rise is incomplete and will probably remain so for some time. Regardless, we must prepare and respond. Forecast models for the timing and height of sea level rise vary, but the models all agree that unless greenhouse gas emissions are reduced, sea level rise is inevitable. Current science indicates that sea levels may rise between 11 and 39 inches by 2100.

The City will use adaptive management to proactively respond to new data and changing local conditions. City work outlines well-defined response

scenarios tailored to varying heights and timing of sea rise. These scenarios will necessarily evolve over time. The City's Public Works Department and the Capital Facilities Plan will help implement identified infrastructure needs. Financial assistance will be sought from State and Federal sources.

Sea level rise is a regional challenge. Many of us rely upon our downtown, its services and associated shorelines. Actions taken to adapt to sea level rise will require close coordination with the State of Washington and Port of Olympia, key shoreline property owners and the LOTT Clean Water Alliance, operator of the regional wastewater treatment plant. As a waterfront city, sea level rise response will be a key priority for Olympia over the next two decades and beyond. Technical and planning information regarding Olympia's response to climate change and sea level rise is available on the City webpage.

Other Key Challenges

In addition to sea level rise, ~~Beyond our community's values and vision there~~ are other major global, national and local influences that present both challenges and opportunities for our local community. Implementation of theis vision and goals in this Plan will require creative solutions so that Olympia canto:

Become a More Sustainable City: As the capital of the State of Washington, Olympia has a unique opportunity to show leadership on key issues in the state, such as sustainability. The City needs to make investments based on an integrated framework that compares lifecycle costs and benefits of all City investments and to encourage sustainable practices by individuals and organizations through education, technical assistance, and incentives.

Accommodate Growth: Increased growth in Olympia is anticipated. Citizens need to integrate the: quality of new residences, demographics, likely places of residence, housing typology, and prevention of rural and city sprawl. In addition, citizens need to identify housing and service programs for increased populations of seniors and homeless.

Integrate Shoreline Management Program (SMP): Special coordination is necessary to integrate the SMP with the Comprehensive Plan. Olympians value ample public space along their marine shoreline and waterways to balance growth downtown.

Revitalize Our Downtown: Located on Puget Sound and along the Deschutes River, downtown is the site of many historic buildings and places, and is home to

many theatres, galleries, and unique shops as well as the State Capitol. At the same time, Olympia's downtown has yet to become the walkable, comfortable place the community desires. To add vibrancy while retaining our desired small town feel will require more downtown residents, better amenities, attractive public spaces, green space, thriving local businesses, and integrated standards for design.

Conserve and Protect Limited Natural Resources: As we grow, Olympia will become a higher density city and our land and water supplies will need to support more people. We can take advantage of growth as a tool to reshape our community into a more sustainable form; to do so we must balance growth, use our resources wisely, and consider the carrying capacity of the land.

Address Climate Change: The impetus of the sea level rise challenge described above is climate change. Rising global greenhouse gas emissions are contributing to the melting of the polar ice caps, rising sea levels and more frequent extreme weather events. The City of Olympia is committed to working with the public and other regional partners to take actions that will reduce our community's overall greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for changing climate.

~~**Address Climate Change and Sea-Level Rise:** Sea level could rise in Olympia by 50 inches or more over the next century due to warming of the oceans and settling land. This will put much of Olympia's downtown at risk of flooding since it lies only one to three feet above the current highest high tides. Over the next 20 years, the City will continue to explore how to address sea level rise impacts on our downtown.~~



Fund a Long-term Vision: The economy fluctuates and funding circumstances change. This affects our ability to carry out planned actions over the years. Present resources are already stretched thin, and there is little ability to take on new programs without new revenue sources. We must identify funding strategies, explore operating efficiencies and develop partnerships to provide the diversity and flexibility to fund our vision.



Young Olympians working together to plant a tree.

[[Photo: YoungOlympiansPlantTree.jpg align=right caption=Young Olympians working together to plant a tree.]]

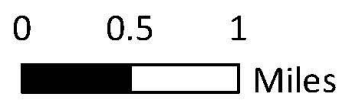
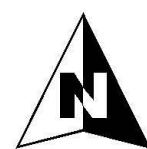
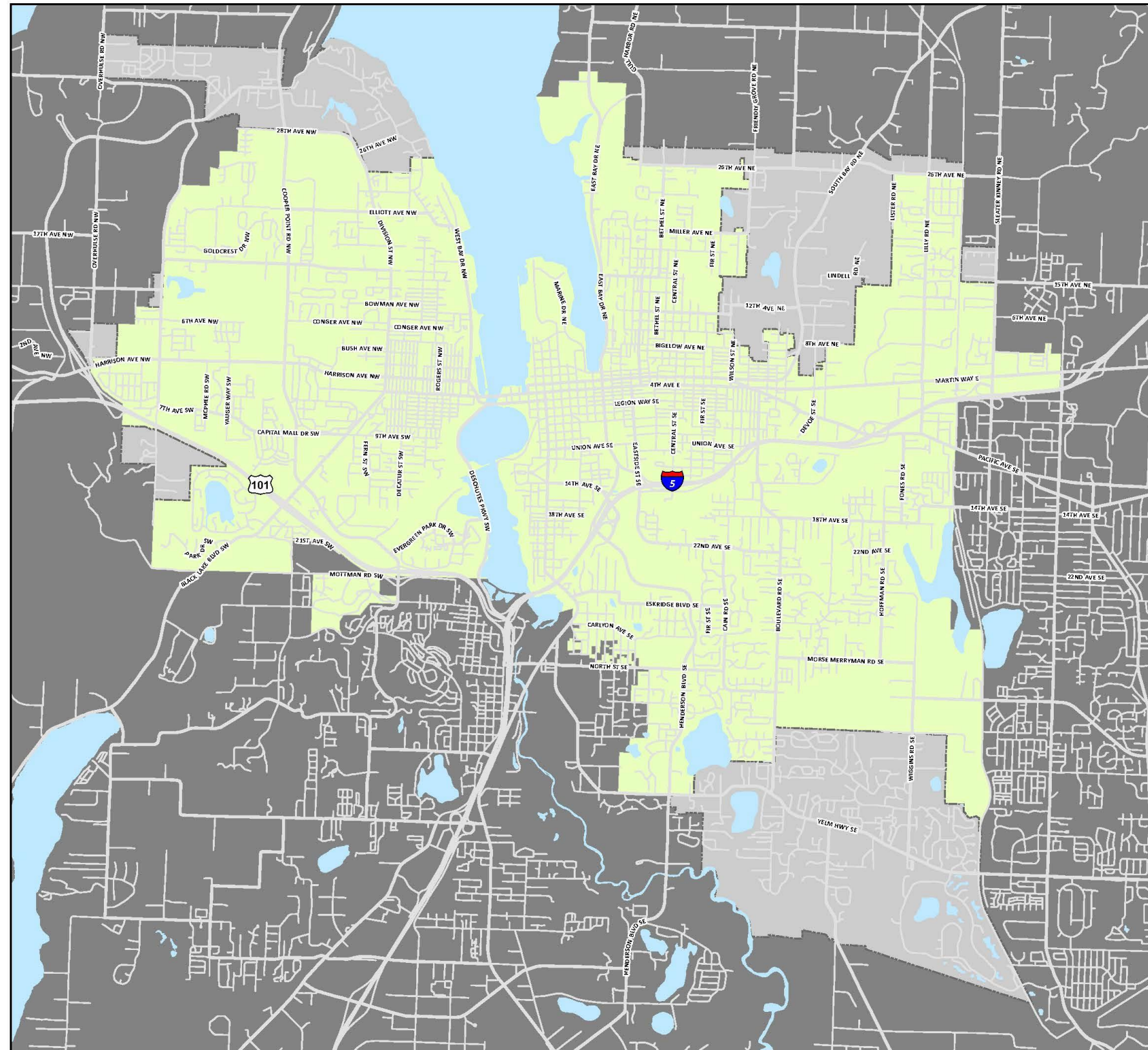
For More Information

- The [Washington State Growth Management Act](#)  establishes rules to guide the development of comprehensive plans and development regulations that shape growth over a 20-year horizon
- The [Buildable Lands Report](#)  prepared for Thurston County by the staff of the Thurston Regional Planning Council helps Olympia to determine the quantity of land to provide for population and employment growth.
- [The City's Action Plan includes a collaborative public process for selecting specific actions to carry out the Comprehensive Plan, and includes timeframes, partnerships and performance measures.](#)
- [Current and past technical analyses and reports regarding sea level rise in Olympia can be reviewed on the City's Sea Level Rise webpage.](#)

City Limits and Urban Growth Area

City Council Public Hearing Draft, 2014

-  Urban Growth Area
-  City Limits



The City of Olympia and its personnel cannot assure the accuracy, completeness, reliability, or suitability of this information for any particular purpose. The parcels, right-of-ways, utilities and structures depicted hereon are based on record information and aerial photos only. It is recommended the recipient and/or user field verify all information prior to use. The use of this data for purposes other than those for which they were created may yield inaccurate or misleading results. The recipient may not assert any proprietary rights to this information. The City of Olympia and its personnel neither accept or assume liability or responsibility, whatsoever, for any activity involving this information with respect to lost profits, lost savings or any other consequential damages.

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