

Proposed Downtown Plan

Draft of June 15, 2012

Proposed to be adopted concurrently with updated Olympia Comprehensive Plan. This document is composed of pages 76 to 97 of former Comprehensive Plan – excerpted and reformatted for adoption as separate document. Content not changed.

Introduction

Downtown Olympia deserves special attention because it is the heart of the city. A city with a thriving downtown has more potential for bolstering community spirit and providing a healthy local economy. Just as in nature, where life force is dependent on a center, so too is a human community dependent on a center. For modern urban society, the downtown area assumes this central role.

Olympia's Downtown includes roughly 530 acres. It is bounded generally by the State Capitol Campus, Capitol Lake, Budd Inlet, and Eastside Street. This area represents the heart of Olympia's retail core, established office uses, pedestrian access to the waterfront, and the center of most major transportation links. Due to its history, physical location and established identity, this area is truly the heart of Olympia.

A Vision for Downtown

In the future, as the Capital City, Downtown Olympia will continue to be the cultural, social, and economic center of the region. This role will be reinforced by more pedestrian-oriented streetscapes, livable and affordable Downtown housing for a range of incomes, increased retail, service, and office development, and safe, vital and vibrant street life. Economic vitality will continue to grow. Development scale and patterns will be compatible with the existing downtown fabric of small blocks and human-scaled places and buildings. This human scale will lend itself to pedestrian, bicycle, and transit travel, in addition to automobile travel.

The Downtown of the future will reinforce the image of a livable Capital City which is responsive to the needs of its residents, commuters, legislators, and visitors from across the State. Overall quality of design, of both streets and buildings, will be higher, and will contribute to a higher quality of life.

Development intensity will be increased in the Downtown. Less land will be devoted to parking lots along the street in key areas; people will park in well-located, screened lots on the street, in garages, and structured parking built into projects. The skyline will be varied and interesting, with the Capitol dome as the predominant landmark. Building heights will decline as one nears the waterfront and the adjacent neighborhoods.

There will be larger buildings Downtown, but they will be designed with human-scaled detailing, and have varied roof forms and sculptured building tops. Large masses will appear as aggregates of smaller, harmonious parts.

Downtown Olympia will be home to a mix of uses, so that retail, offices, and housing are located near one another. Future development will be aesthetically acceptable to the residents of the community, because it will follow the development scale and patterns which were identified as acceptable and desirable by the citizens of Olympia.

Although Downtown streets carry a lot of traffic, they will be pleasant places for walking, bicycling and driving. Tree-lined pedestrian-oriented streets will be lined with buildings, and where the buildings are setback, the area between the sidewalk and the building will have a pedestrian orientation. Buildings on key streets will have awnings. Parking lots will be at the sides and the back of buildings. First floors of buildings will be interesting to look at and into, with human-scaled architectural detailing. Major entries to buildings will be on the street and will lead directly into the buildings. Blank walls and boxy, flat, boring buildings will be a thing of the past. Parking garages

will look like normal buildings in the streetscape, and will not interrupt building walls where they face the street. Structured parking will be encouraged as blocks redevelop in order to allow well designed urban edges to emerge in place of the amorphous mix of surface parking lots that use downtown land in an unsustainable fashion.

Existing Conditions

Most of the Downtown is already developed. The only land areas without some level of urban development lie mainly along railroad right-of-way or at the south end of East Bay on Budd Inlet. The remaining area is developed in a traditional grid pattern with a variety of uses and activities. The overall health and condition of the Downtown are good. There are no pockets of urban blight or conditions representing an imminent health or safety hazard, although individual buildings in scattered locations may be in poor condition.

General Land Use. As Washington State's capital city, Olympia is fortunate in having a compact Downtown with a distinctive retail core, clearly defined town square, attractive flavoring of architectural styles, and a healthy combination of office, service, trade and governmental uses. Although not the retail center it once was, Downtown Olympia is just entering into a third-generation renaissance, attracting small specialty shops, boutiques, restaurants, and tourist-related activities. Over the last decade it has also experienced a major wave of office construction.

As in most cities, Downtown Olympia has a number of nodes of activity. The best example today is the retail core area. Another node with a clear identity is the Percival Landing waterfront. As noted urban planner Kevin Lynch once stated, "... nodes are the conceptual anchor points in our cities... The essence of this type of element [spatial form] is that it be a distinct, unforgettable place, not to be confused with any other. Intensity of use strengthens this identity, of course, and sometimes the very intensity of use creates the visual shapes which are distinctive, as in Times Square." (Kevin Lynch, The Image of the City, 1960, page 102.) Local examples from Seattle include Pioneer Square, Pike Place Market, Capital Hill and the International District, among others. Olympia's Downtown can also benefit from encouraging such activity nodes.

Residential Uses. The Downtown has four areas with concentrations of housing. The first is the retail core where many second- and third-story apartments accommodate a mostly low- and moderate-income clientele. The second area lies generally between 7th and Union and Franklin and Jefferson streets. This area consists of a mix of single-family and multifamily housing. A third area of mixed single-family and multifamily is found east of Jefferson Street, south of Union Avenue. A fourth such pocket is located between Fifth and Eighth and Pear and Eastside. Pockets of additional housing are scattered throughout the Downtown, most typically as second-story apartments. A strategy for encouraging Downtown housing is addressed later in this Chapter.

Commercial Uses. Most of the Downtown is devoted to one form or another of commercial activity. Downtown Olympia is relatively well balanced between trade and services. While not the major retail center of the community, the Downtown nevertheless has strong employment in finance, insurance, real estate, wholesale trade, and miscellaneous services, as well as a significant level of retail trade.

Industrial Uses. It is likely that, over time, most of the existing industrial uses will leave Downtown because of escalating land prices or the need for expansion. Some activity will likely remain to be near the Port. Most of the present industry is light manufacturing, warehousing, or wholesaling, and

does not conflict with other Downtown uses. It is mostly located either north of State Avenue or between Jefferson, Plum, Fifth, and Eighth.

Public Uses. With its proximity to the Capitol Campus, Olympia's Downtown has a strong presence of governmental and other forms of institutional land uses. Most of this presence is masked as general office space. Thousands of State employees occupy hundreds of thousands of square feet of leased office space Downtown, in buildings with no clear identification with the State government.

The major public facilities in Downtown Olympia include: Olympia City Hall, Old City Hall, the LOTT Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant, the Farmers' Market, Olympia Timberland Regional Library, the Old State Capitol Building, the Federal Building, the Post Office, the Olympia Maintenance Center, the Washington Center for the Performing Arts, and the Olympia Center.

Downtown has special advantages in its parks, open space and waterfront. Sylvester Park, our town square, enhances our retail core with its huge, stately trees, historic statue, and bandstand/gazebo. Heritage Park offers picnicking, a children's play area, and public restrooms. A walking/jogging trail begins at the park and follows the lake's western shore. Parts of Budd Inlet have been transformed from an industrial waterfront to a commercial, recreational waterfront. Public access has been improved with the construction of Percival Landing and initial stages of the East Bay Marina project. Budd Inlet's full commercial and recreational potential is just beginning to be tapped.

Market Opportunities for the Downtown

Over the past decade, several economic markets have been studied to see what opportunities they offered for the Downtown. These include: (1) retail, (2) office, (3) hotel/conference center, and (4) housing. While other Thurston County locations also compete in these markets, the Downtown does have some innate advantages.

Retail. Retailing is strong in Thurston County as a whole, though only moderate in the Downtown. However, there is a sizeable base in specialty shops, furniture, restaurants, and entertainment. The Downtown is perceived to provide a "warmer" shopping experience than malls. Other advantages appreciated by shoppers include water orientation, historic character, building and streetscape charm, restaurants, community activities, and proximity to the Capitol. For business owners, an important factor is low rent compared to a mall.

Retail activity can keep growing Downtown, given the right approach. Strategies for improving retail potential can be addressed on three levels. First, the Main Street program and others recommend Downtown businesses to coordinate operating and marketing programs (hours of operation, sales promotions, etc.), and to maintain their individual businesses in an attractive manner. The Olympia Downtown Association works hard at this.

Second, the City constantly needs to manage parking and circulation issues, as well as to promote a diversity of land uses Downtown. This means encouraging commercial, public, and residential uses within or near the Downtown. As more people are drawn into the Downtown through the development of offices, housing, tourism, and entertainment, retail sales are stimulated.

Finally, both public and private investment Downtown needs to maximize its unique advantages. Following sound principles of urban design can strengthen its community atmosphere, taking best

advantage of the historic buildings, views, shoreline orientation, and special sites like Sylvester Park and the nearby Capitol.

Office. State Government is the dominant factor in the Olympia area office market. The State of Washington owns roughly two million square feet of office space on the Capital Campus. It owns or leases roughly 1.6 million more in the Downtown. In 1991 the State Capitol Committee approved the Master Plan for the Capitol of the State of Washington. This Plan addresses future office needs for State agencies through the year 2010. It calls for the State to build 640,000 square feet of new office space on the Campus, plus 845,000 square feet in the Downtown. Most of the State's leased space Downtown would be replaced by the new State-owned facilities. This level of commitment to a continued major State presence is important to Downtown's continued economic vitality.

Hotel/Conference Center. The third category considered in Downtown market studies was hotel/conference center potential. Demand for Olympia area hotel rooms is based upon three distinct groups: business and government travelers (55-65 percent of the total demand), tourists (25-35 percent), and convention delegates (the remainder, 10-15 percent). One regional trend seems very clear: travel-related industry is on the rise. With the Downtown's proximity to the capitol and various water bodies, the city already has features which could stimulate interest. If demand for more hotel space becomes evident, it could be satisfied by the expansion of existing facilities or the construction of another hotel. The ideal location for a new hotel would be within view of the waterfront and near the center of Downtown.

A hotel might also be planned in conjunction with a conference/trade show center. If so, facilities could include space for offices, food and beverage consumption, and entertainment. Such a mixed use development might be particularly feasible if it were to use an existing building to provide conference/trade show space. Overall setting (both natural and built environment) is an important element in a project's appeal and consequent success.

Housing. The City of Olympia has long supported the construction and renovation of Downtown housing. It is a permitted use in all the Downtown zoning districts except industrial. The City Department of Community Planning and Development actively assists developers and property-owners to build new or renovate existing housing using City, state, and federal funding sources. During the last decade, the Department was involved in Downtown projects totaling several hundred dwelling units.

We now have about 1,600 people living in more than 1,000 dwellings in the Downtown. About two-thirds of them are in the residential enclaves in the Union Avenue and the Jefferson Street sub-areas. Most of the Downtown housing is at or near the low end of the price spectrum. Market studies have found that there continues to be a demand for new housing development in the Downtown, one that can include middle to upper income occupants if located in areas that offer high amenity (adjacent to parks, Percival Landing, shopping, beautiful streets, and some opportunity for views). Residents in this income range are especially needed to provide balance to the Downtown and to provide a resident clientele for expanded Downtown services and activities. City commitment to community policing downtown will require residents who can provide 18 hour surveillance of streets, parks, and Percival Landing.

In a 1985 report by the Real Estate Research Corporation (RERC) on nation-wide downtown housing trends, the advantages of successful downtown housing growth were neatly summarized:

"Carefully planned downtown housing reinforces other revitalization efforts. With close-in housing available, downtown becomes a more attractive place to locate offices, and its residents support a variety of small retailers and reinforce larger retailers. Moreover, the addition of people on the streets at night makes downtowns more attractive for hotel and convention business. A mixture of strong land uses creates a level of activity and excitement that attracts more patrons for such uses. The total, in other words, is far greater than the sum of its parts." ("Downtown Housing--Where the Action Is," RERC, Journal of Real Estate Development, Summer 1985.)

The City needs more middle and upper income Downtown residents to bring more trade Downtown and make it an active place 18 hours a day instead of ten. At the same time, we cannot neglect the need to maintain housing for lower income people. These residents--among whom the young, working poor and the elderly are heavily represented--benefit from the availability of jobs and of services offered Downtown, as well as the access to the public transportation upon which many depend.

The Plan for the Downtown

Planning for the Downtown must recognize and accentuate its unique features. When these desirable, unique features are supported and interrelated, the economic health and attractiveness of the Downtown are increased many-fold. These features, when used repeatedly and in concert, are really "themes" which the community emphasizes to enhance the vitality of the Downtown.

Introduction: The Five Downtown Themes. The following five themes--past, present, and future qualities and activities that give Olympia's Downtown its special identity--should guide our future planning as they have shaped our past:

1. Olympia's Downtown is the urban hub of Southern Puget Sound, with all the cultural, entertainment, and recreational emphasis naturally associated with its role as the economic center of the region.
2. Olympia's Downtown is waterfront-oriented, with a modern seaport, marinas, recreational uses, and attractive views from many points.
3. Olympia's Downtown is home to the State Capitol and State government generally, with the many political, administrative, professional, and tourist activities generated by such status.
4. Olympia's Downtown is a neighborhood where a range of owner and renter residents contribute to an 18 hour vital and safe city center, where ownership and use of cars is a choice – not a necessity, and where dense housing encourages sustainable use of land and supports full use of alternative transportation modes.
5. Olympia's Downtown is a historic resource, with much of the State's and region's past reflected in its layout and design, and in the character of its buildings.

These five themes have heavily influenced most of the provisions of this Comprehensive Plan for Olympia's Downtown.

Because the Downtown has a variety of activity nodes with differing current land uses and future potentials, the goals and policies herein are organized by sub-areas roughly corresponding to those nodes.

Recommended Goals and Policies by Sub-Area

City Center

Existing Character. Generally bounded by 7th Avenue on the south, Columbia Street on the west, Corky Avenue on the north, and Adams Street on the east, this area is the functional center of Downtown activities and the symbolic center of the entire city. It contains the widest range of land uses, from light manufacturing to personal services. Comprising 81 acres, this area also contains the intersection of two of the city's major transportation facilities: Capitol Way and the 4th Avenue/State Street corridors.

There is an increasing range of goods and personal services available. The number of small specialty shops is increasing, and they are close to one another, ideal for walk-in trade. In recent years there has been a concerted effort for businesses to broaden their appeal to encourage more shopping Downtown. These efforts have included increased promotion and physical improvements.

This area is also the regional center for finance, commerce, and professional services. In addition to the private/professional offices and services, the State of Washington leases or owns much of the office space in this sub-area.

This sub-area also has dozens of historically significant buildings, reflecting its role as the center of city life since its foundation more than a century ago. There are good examples of a wide variety of architectural styles representing every decade since the 1880's. Too numerous to mention here, the most important of these buildings are described in the Olympia Heritage Commission's 1984 study, "Downtown Olympia's Historic Resources.

In addition to being the regional center for financial and professional services, this sub-area also serves as a regional entertainment and cultural center. There are numerous eating and drinking establishments and limited night-time entertainment, as well as one film theater. Several performing arts theaters including the Washington Center for the Performing Arts provide a wide range of events and activities that appeal to all ages and interests. Another exciting addition to this area has been the Olympia Center, completed in 1987. The Olympia Child Care/Family Center opened in the historic Old City Hall in 1994.

In addition to the many types of commercial, business, and cultural activities, there are several hundred apartment units, most in upper stories of mixed-use buildings. In the late 90s, 284 units of senior housing were added on the east side of Capitol Way between Olympia and B Avenue.

Goal Statement. This sub-area's proximity to three waterfronts--the East Bay, the West Bay, and Capitol Lake--permits recreational and water-related uses and offers great potential for drawing people to the City Center live, work, shop, and play. However, the relationship of the downtown to these waterfront areas is presently weak and should be strengthened by completing plans along public rights-of-way (such as 4th Avenue bridge and Gateway Corridor improvements) and pedestrian linkages with design features expressing a waterfront theme.

Blocks adjacent or close to Heritage Park and Percival Landing should be encouraged to redevelop into housing with street level activity where possible, in order to contribute to the city vision for an active 18 hour city; create well-designed urban edges that link one area with another; contribute to the walkability of an area; add resident surveillance of public spaces to increase safety and decrease

vandalism or other security problems; and help meet city housing density goals for a full range of incomes and housing choices that meet changing demographic needs.

This area is linked by commerce to the State Capitol in many ways. Businesses here provide retail, restaurant, financial and professional services for state employees, the legislature, and members of the public doing business with the State. Many state government offices are located in the area itself.

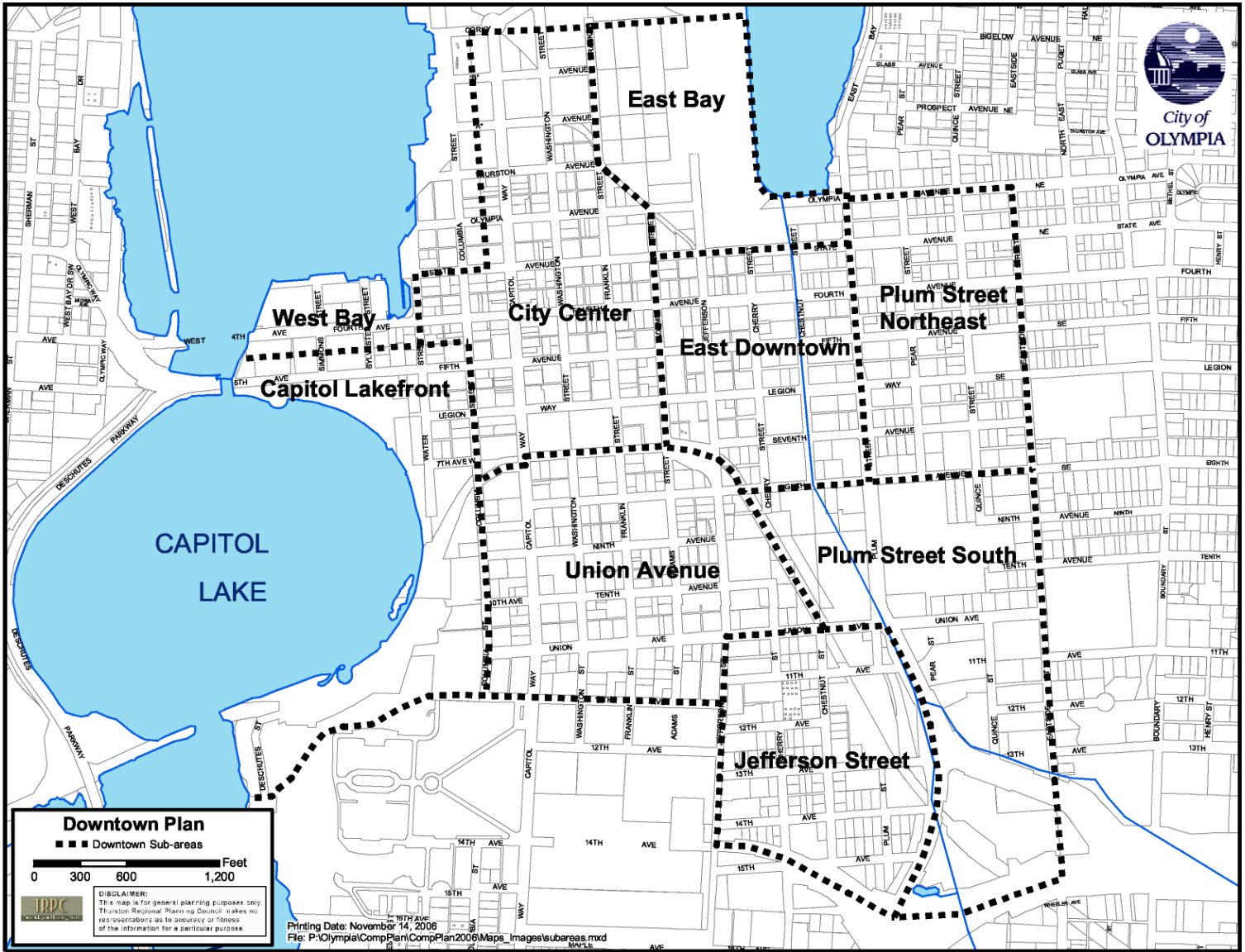
Physical access and thematic links to the Capitol should be strengthened. The City endorses the State Capitol Plan for developing additional State office space within Downtown Olympia. The City encourages such offices to locate on appropriate sites in any of the Downtown sub-areas.

Many of Olympia's historic structures are found in this area. Those with historic significance or architectural merit should be preserved and enhanced. See Olympia Comprehensive Plan for more policy discussion on historic preservation.

As the urban hub, the area already has many of the region's cultural, recreational, and entertainment facilities. Further such development should be strongly encouraged. Several significant attractions (the Washington Center, the Olympia Center, Sylvester Park, the Farmers' Market, restaurants, etc.) establish this area as the center of city life.

In general, such currently dominant activities as retail, financial, and professional services, cultural, entertainment and recreational activities, and similar uses should be encouraged to expand in numbers and quality. Residential opportunities should be increased, especially in upper story usage and in new developments, in order to make the area more of a 24-hour City Center. Zoning for the area should offer a bonus of up to two stories provided that the added stories are residential. Areas where housing projects and neighborhoods of housing are most likely to be feasible and successful should be zoned to encourage housing.

North of "A" Avenue, non-industrial uses should be required to incorporate design and/or construction techniques that would minimize the effects of noise from the Port, incorporate disclosure statements into property titles to the effect that these properties may be subject to such impacts, and sign agreements approved by the Olympia City Attorney holding the Port harmless for such impacts.



Capitol Lakefront

Existing Character. Highlighted by the 25 acre Heritage Park that forms the northern edge of the State Capitol Campus, this 54-acre sub-area forms half of the western edge of the Downtown study area. The Capitol dome dominates the views to the south as it rises above the wooded hillside between the lake and Capitol Campus. On the north side of the sub-area, the Capital Center Building towers over the isthmus which forms the primary link with West Olympia.

Aside from the obvious park-related lands, the primary land use in this sub-area is devoted to office space used by both government and private concerns. The State of Washington alone leases more than 60,000 square feet. In addition to the business and professional offices there is also a mixture of personal services.

There is limited residential use in this area, primarily in the apartments along Columbia Street above the Burlington Northern switching yards.

Goal Statement. Although Capitol Lake and Heritage Park are the major magnets in this sub-area, much of it has little or no water orientation in its uses. For example, the blocks between Water and Columbia Streets have only one business with a water orientation. Future development should emphasize more intense passive and active recreational use of the Lakefront. This sub-area should be encouraged to develop in residential, with commercial and retail uses at the street level where possible, which are compatible with the park and recreational use of the Lakefront. Such uses are particularly desirable along Water Street and in the area along Fifth Avenue in order to attract middle and higher income residents to downtown living where they can contribute to city visions for a vital live, work, shop, and play environment that is safe and inviting to all downtown visitors all hours of the day and evening.

In collaboration with the State, the City will work to complete the State Capitol Heritage Park and the City owned Heritage Park Fountain block. Upon completion this project will strongly link together the Capitol, the City Center, and the waterfront, and will further enhance the Downtown's role as the urban hub of Southern Puget Sound. Heritage Park properties acquired in public ownership should be zoned as public open space.

Immediately north of the General Administration Building views, overlooks, and access to Heritage Park create amenities necessary to attract housing projects. Heights should be similar to the downtown business district building height across Columbia Street.

If Burlington Northern abandons rail service to the West Bay Drive area, the City, working with the Port, should be prepared to acquire the remaining right-of-way.

West Bay Waterfront

Existing Character. This sub-area is characterized by its orientation to Budd Inlet. It still contains reminders of days gone by when most of the area was a working waterfront. Those are now giving way to new development which is turning toward the waterfront. A major public/private investment has been made in the successful Percival Landing Waterfront Park with its boardwalk, docks, Percival Landing Expansion Park and the addition of the Port of Olympia extension of Percival

Landing, the viewing tower and it's planned Port Plaza Park. This sub-area also contains three marinas and the Olympia Yacht Club, providing private and semi-public access to the waterfront.

In addition to the water-oriented activities, there is also a significant amount of retail and office activity. Most of the retail uses are small concerns, with the exception of Bayview Thriftway. Office space in this area is largely devoted to government agencies.

In addition, scores of people live on boats moored in the area's marinas. Census data and informal surveys indicate that the population of "live-aboards" in this area has been increasing.

Goal Statement. With the improvements to Percival Landing, this sub-area contains Olympia's major public-oriented marine waterfront. A goal of redevelopment in this area should be to make this waterfront a more accessible focal point and to increase its use by the public. Small boat moorage should continue to be a major activity. Any such redevelopment should be designed to avoid adverse impacts on Budd Inlet, minimizing contamination of its waters.

The area between Fourth and Fifth Avenues west of Sylvester Street should be encouraged to develop in high density housing projects combining retail and residential uses. A grocery store in this area is key to housing in the area and the rest of downtown. The existing store should be encouraged to remain in the area. The remainder of the block between Sylvester and Water Streets should be acquired to allow completion of the City Heritage Park Fountain block as planned. Otherwise, it too should develop in retail and residential uses.

North of State Avenue, along with retail uses and upper story residences, office development should be encouraged in order to bring in a year-round daytime population. The transition away from warehousing should be encouraged to continue. The Farmers' Market works together with Percival Landing to increase the usage of both, benefiting the whole neighborhood. It should be encouraged to expand in scale.

The State Capitol is visible from much of Percival Landing, establishing an important visual link. Completion of the Heritage Park Fountain block will complete the major visual link to the State Capitol. This links should be maintained as much as possible, as well as view corridors with Budd Inlet.

Better pedestrian access to the City Center needs to be established, particularly crossing State Avenue, Water Street, and Fourth Avenue. In addition, a pedestrian link with the East Bay will need to be developed.

North of "A" Avenue, non-industrial uses should be required to incorporate design and/or construction techniques that would minimize the effects of noise from the Port, incorporate disclosure statements into property titles to the effect that these properties may be subject to such impacts, and sign agreements approved by the Olympia City Attorney holding the Port harmless for such impacts.

The Urban Waterfront Plan (1993) contains City policies and regulations governing over-the-water construction in this area.

East Bay Waterfront

See Industrial Goals and Policies of Olympia Comprehensive Plan.

Port

See Industrial Goals and Policies of Olympia Comprehensive Plan.

Plum Street Northeast

Existing Character. This 45.67 acre sub-area forms the northeastern half of the Plum Street corridor and lies immediately east of the East Downtown area. While this area is perceived to be one in transition, the trend seems more subtle than in the area immediately south. Currently, the strongest redevelopment pressure is for new office development.

There are a small number of houses and apartments in this area. Similar to the South Plum Street sub-area, many of the residences are giving way to the development of commercial uses, primarily personal services and professional offices. This area is viewed as a transition or buffer zone between Downtown commercial activities and the lower-density residential areas on the Eastside Hill. The combination of quasi-commercial zoning and the recent growth in office space threatens the survival of most remaining residences in this area.

Both the Old Washington School gym and playfield, and St. Michael's Parish Church and School are located immediately adjacent to the sub-area and do provide a significant level of public activity.

Goal Statement. This sub-area represents a transition zone between the Eastside Neighborhoods and East Downtown. Fourth and State Avenues provide the principal northeastern entrance and exit for the Downtown. As the transition zone to the major entrances, these streets should receive special beautification, with street trees and decorative street lights. These treatments draw attention to downtown's entry, and support pedestrian connectivity between the two areas.

The intensity of development (e.g., building height and bulk, floor area ratio, etc.) should be lower on the East Side than in the East Downtown area on the west side of Plum Street. The intent is to establish a gradual transition from the Downtown to the residential neighborhood of the near East Side. Accordingly, the blocks between Pear and Eastside Streets should have a mixture of low- and mid-rise buildings (roughly three to six stories). [See Comprehensive Plan policies regarding parking.]

The commercial corridor along Fourth and State Avenues should be encouraged to develop in uses similar to the City Center to the west of Pear Street. In this area, as elsewhere Downtown, up to two extra stories should be allowed as a bonus, provided the added stories are residential. East of Pear Street, retail, office, and residential uses are all appropriate, but they should be at lower intensity than to the west i.e., roughly three to six stories. North of State Street, the area abuts the residential Bigelow Neighborhood. The half-blocks along Olympia Avenue which are in residential uses should remain residential.

This Downtown sub-area will eventually become an eastward extension of the City Center. Therefore the same overall design goals should prevail, in order to develop an attractive, pedestrian-oriented environment.

East Downtown

Existing Character. This 43.49 acre sub-area on the west side of Plum Street has a wide range of land uses. These include general retail, auto sales and service, retail grocery and hardware sales, office—including a major state office with structured parking at the south end of the district, theater, eating and drinking establishments, and limited personal and professional services.

Goal Statement. An East Downtown Development Plan (completed in 2005), and plans for the 17-acre port property to the north, will result in the evolution of this relatively homogenous heavy commercial area over time into a unique and vibrant crossroads district. This area links the downtown core, the port, government office district, the transit center, and the eastside neighborhoods. The vision emerging from the East Downtown Plan includes a dense mix of commercial activities and housing types within a walkable neighborhood setting. Entertainment and art activities will add evening activity. Historic buildings will contribute to the district's character. The highest building height and bulk allowed in the downtown extends to this area.

To achieve the vision, streets in the area should be improved, including along Cherry and Chestnut, Legion Way—west of Plum, and 4th Avenue and State Street. These improvements will continue to accommodate vehicle traffic while encouraging: 1) pedestrian and bicycle traffic from the eastside into the downtown core, and 2) north/south movement linking government offices and housing with a mix of services, shopping, entertainment, the port property, and waterfront access to the north. Streetscape plans and improvements in the area will provide visual continuity, helping to unify diverse building character and activities.

Plum Street South

Existing Character. This 68-acre sub-area serves as one of the primary entrances into Downtown Olympia. It is also bisected by Plum Street, one of the main transportation corridors to the Port of Olympia, north Olympia and the Boston Harbor area.

This was once a mixed use district. Warehousing, freight yards, wholesale sales and repair businesses were located to the west of Plum Street. Mixed residential and offices were located on the east side of Plum Street. Over the past few years this area has experienced significant growth and change.

The area has now clearly shifted to office uses. This trend is probably best illustrated by the Towne Square office complex located between 8th and Union avenues on Plum Street. Completed in 1986, it provides roughly 250,000 square feet of office space and houses more than 1,000 state employees in a variety of agencies

Other large concentrations of State offices are located in the Capitol Plaza Building located at the corner of Union and Eastside Streets, and Eastside Plaza on Eastside Street near the Interstate 5 Plum Street off-ramp. In all, the State of Washington leases roughly 400,000 square feet of office space in this area.

This area is also the seat of Olympia Municipal government. City Hall is located at 8th and Plum and the Maintenance Center is just off Eastside Street near Interstate 5. The City also bought the Smith Building at 7th and Pear in 1988. It houses the Department of Community Planning and Development.

The number of residences in this area has declined since 1980 to almost none.

Goal Statement. This sub-area is the major Downtown entry point from Interstate 5, and its southern end is a logical site for auto-oriented businesses and activities. Because of high demand for office growth, the sub-area will also continue to be converted to high-intensity office development. New offices built in this area should be bold and dramatic in design--especially those located at the intersection of Plum and Union--to make a strong statement about our City.

Plum Street and Union Avenue should both be landscaped boulevards. As major entrances, these streets should receive special beautification, with street trees and decorative street lights. Union Avenue should be developed with pedestrian-oriented features (see landscaping recommendations, below) to facilitate the connection with the State Capitol.

Similar to the Plum Street North sub-area, the area west of Quince Street should be in higher intensity development, the area to the east in lower intensity, as measured by such factors as building height and bulk, or floor area ratio. The blocks near Eastside Street should have low-rise buildings, up to three stories.

Union Avenue

Existing Character. This sub-area is approximately 52 acres in size. It is bounded by Columbia Street on the west, 7th Avenue on the north, the Union Pacific Railroad tracks on the east and 11th Avenue on the south. Although the Capitol Campus lies outside this area, it has a tremendous influence and impact on the neighborhood, primarily with regard to traffic and parking. Union Avenue, Columbia Street, Capitol Way and 11th Avenue provide primary access to the Capitol Campus and nearby State offices.

A number of different activities and land uses are found in this area. The major public attractions are the Olympia Post Office and Olympia Public Library. Two of the three Downtown motels are located in this area. Additionally, there are a number of churches.

Overall, the predominant land uses are personal and professional services and office space. The State of Washington alone leases or owns more than 160,000 square feet of office space. The largest concentration of these offices is located in the Evergreen Plaza Building and the 9th and Columbia Building. Numerous statewide organizations also have headquarters buildings located here, including the Washington State Grange, the Washington State Association of Counties, and the Association of Washington Cities.

Another unique feature of this area is the relatively high resident population. Similar to other Downtown residential areas, this neighborhood has lost residences, primarily rentals, to office construction. The current demand for office space combined with the close proximity to both the central core and Capitol Campus may very well hasten the destruction of relatively inexpensive housing in Downtown.

Goal Statement. This sub-area has a wide variety of land uses, with only a modest orientation toward the Capitol, in spite of its proximity. The connection with the Capitol is established mainly by Capitol Way, which links the State Campus with the City Center. Street trees somewhat strengthen this link; pedestrian-oriented land uses should be encouraged along this street to further strengthen it.

Much of the available Downtown housing is located in this sub-area. Portions of the area should be zoned for mandatory residential or mixed-use development to preserve a residential enclave in the Downtown. The remainder of the area should be encouraged to develop in high intensity offices, retail, and service activities.

Union Avenue and Jefferson Street should both receive pedestrian-oriented landscaping treatment, to tie this sub-area together with neighboring ones. Eighth Avenue, anchored by the Olympia Public Library, should receive the same treatment to help develop a strong connection between the City Center and the major office development occurring to the east.

This sub-area also contains numerous historic buildings, both commercial and residential, which should be preserved.

Jefferson Street

Existing Character. This 39-acre neighborhood is clearly the largest residential section of the Downtown study area. Similar to other areas of Downtown, particularly the Union Avenue neighborhood, this neighborhood provides low cost housing close to state offices and the services and attractions of the Downtown area. It also reflects the increasing pressures to convert this low-cost, in-town housing to office space. This trend is best illustrated by the office development that has taken place along Jefferson Street between 14th and Union Avenues.

It is probably safe to assume that the primary factor currently saving this area from conversion to nonresidential uses is the zoning classification for multifamily residential.

Goal Statement. Low-rise offices housing statewide organizations line Jefferson Street across from the wide lawns of the East Campus, graphically displaying the relationship between this sub-area and the State Capitol. The Jefferson Street frontage should continue to be available for a similar scale of office use. These smaller offices would provide a buffer between the mammoth and bustling State complex and the quiet residential neighborhood to the east. This residential area contains the largest single reservoir of Downtown housing. Pressures to convert it to non-residential development should be strenuously resisted. Instead, it should continue to be available for high density multifamily housing, with related and accessory uses.

Jefferson Street itself will increasingly become a major corridor between Interstate 5 and the Capitol Campus on the south, and the City Center on the north. It too should receive appropriate landscaping treatment to enhance this function.

South Capitol Neighborhood

The South Capitol Neighborhood lies to the east and west of Capitol Way immediately south of the State Capitol Campus. While most of the arterial streets that connect downtown with outlying areas are designated High Density Corridors with a mix of uses, the South Capitol Neighborhood is

designated a Medium Density Corridor. This designation is appropriate since the land adjacent to Capitol Way through the neighborhood was never zoned for commercial (except for a designated node of commercial at 21st). Other City arterials have always been zoned for a mix of uses. In addition, the lack of non-historic building intrusions allow the South Capitol area to meet the requirements of a Historic District. Consequently, while the area will not have additional mixed uses located on the corridor, it will continue to add density through the addition of accessory dwelling units and the addition of single-family or duplex units. In 2000, the South Capitol Neighborhood had the highest density in the City (10.7 units/acre) compared to 6 to 7 units/acre in the older portions of either the Westside or Eastside of Olympia.

Implementation Strategy

Urban Design Analysis

This section looks at the Downtown from a somewhat different perspective than its functional orientation, inherent in land use and transportation descriptions. The concept of urban design introduces a qualitative measure of urban form and physical features. This section explores the historic and architectural contribution of buildings, assesses the character of the streetscape and describes the Downtown in terms of size and scale.

Existing Conditions. The primary factor that has shaped the character of Olympia has been state government and the State Capitol. Consequently, it is a city rich in history with many buildings and spaces important not only locally, but also state-wide.

Surrounded on two sides by water and on two others by steep, once-forested hills, the Downtown area has remained a relatively compact center with few opportunities for expansion. Its appearance reminds us of a "small town" with all of the positive attributes that such an image suggests. There are a number of physical features that provide this special sense of place.

Building Age and Condition. The Olympia/Tumwater area was one of the earliest settlements in the Puget Sound region. Levi Lathrop Smith and his partner Edmund Sylvester established a land claim in 1846 in the Downtown area. Smith died in 1848. Sylvester had the town platted in 1850. He designed Olympia in the image of a New England Village, with a town square and orientation toward the saltwater. The town square, as in many New England communities, became a major focal point for residential, cultural and business activities.

Not many of these early buildings remain, but some from the 19th Century are still present, though most are changed from their original appearance. Among them are the Mottman Building; Chambers, Woodruff and Reed Blocks; Cunningham's; the remodeled but historic Talcott's and Bettman's stores; and Barnes Bank on Capitol Way. A historic resources inventory in 1984 found that twelve percent (18) of the buildings in the City Center date back to the 1800s. This compares to almost the same number (17) constructed from 1950 to the present. The primary character of Downtown is that of an early 20th Century commercial center with its building styles reflecting that era. More than half the Downtown's buildings in the historic part of the City Center were constructed in the three decades from 1900 to 1929.

Streetscape Quality. The character of the streetscape in the retail City Center is largely a function of several key elements: contiguous storefronts, building height and architectural styles, and overhead canopies. Avoiding such interruptions as parking lots and blank walls helps create this sense of

continuity, leading to the retail atmosphere and small town character of the City Center. When buildings, either old or new, have transparent facades at the street level, the products and activities within are highly visible. Other details such as wood framing, small signs, recessed entrances, overhead canopies, and well-designed display windows enhance a sense of place and identity for the City Center.

Outside of the City Center, the Olympia Downtown lacks the character and identity described above. Building styles, uses, heights and ages vary from block to block and building to building. There is no established order to the streetscape. Given the large size and diversity of uses and activity outside the City Center, it is unlikely that this area will ever project a unified image. Rather, it is more likely that separate activity modes, particularly around the waterfront, will begin to appear and reflect an identity and personality all their own.

Downtown generally lacks other aspects of the streetscape such as landscaping, street trees and pedestrian amenities. The 5th Avenue Demonstration Project sponsored by the city and R/UDAT in the early 1980s is a fine example of the type of improvements that can be made in public right-of-way and on private property to improve the appearance and interest of the streetscape.

Downtown Size and Scale. The City Center is a relatively compact arrangement of buildings and spaces. This allows the area to be easily traversed on foot. This compressed setting also allows for frequent and accidental meetings of friends and business associates on a regular basis. The height and massing of buildings is mostly consistent with a variety of small businesses having narrow frontages. The City Center itself is rather compact; therefore, the area outside it has a fairly clear sense of definition. Most of these buildings are of a similar size and scale (2 to 3 stories) with a few noted exceptions such as the Capital Center, Evergreen Plaza, Capitol Plaza, Eastside Plaza, Town Square, 9th and Columbia and General Administration Buildings. Other large or tall buildings such as the Heritage Federal Bank, the Hotel Olympian and the Old State Capitol Building have had more success integrating into the general streetscape and skyline. Given market realities, it seems unlikely that the City Center's skyline will change dramatically over the next several years, but with continued strong demand for office space, we can anticipate renovation of older structures in the city center and construction of major new complexes in the peripheral areas where larger parcels can be assembled.

Design Review Goals

Urban design in Downtown Olympia should express both our heritage and our future. In the Goals and Policies part of this section, four Downtown themes are identified which give the area its special identity: (1) Downtown as urban hub of the region; (2) Downtown's connection with the waterfront; (3) Downtown's connection with the Capitol; and (4) Downtown as historic resource. The purpose behind a design review procedure is to protect and enhance these unique characteristics which are the Downtown's greatest strengths, its heritage and its future. In the words of noted post-modernist Canadian architect Eberhard Zeidler, "The individual building is but a link in the larger whole." Its design can lead to either a strengthening or a weakening of the neighborhood of which it is a part. Thus a building is rather like a citizen. It is not enough that it be useful and profitable; a building also has civic functions to perform.

Thus the function of Downtown design review is to enhance the economic strength and stability of the area, making it an attractive place for business activity and investment. Maintaining the economic health of the Downtown is essential to keeping it an enjoyable, safe place for people of all ages and backgrounds to live, work, shop, or play.

The planning process offers a way for individual Downtown parties to work together as a team. It provides a link between individuals and establishes a framework for decisions which are not purely personal but of significant public impact. Recommendations follow for instituting design review as part of the planning process:

GOAL DT1. Promote urban design in Downtown Olympia which expresses both our heritage and our future.

POLICIES:

DT 1.1 A design review procedure for Downtown buildings will be maintained.

- a. Mandatory guidelines will be maintained which are specific, but flexible in nature, and which allow for creativity. Design review is intended not to suppress innovation, but to guide development so that it enhances our community.
- b. The guidelines will allow different design approaches in different areas of the Downtown to reflect their different characters
- c. The design review procedure should be smooth and speedy so that development is not discouraged. Design review should be concurrent with site plan review.
- d. The city will provide adequate staffing to ensure compliance with design standards, site improvements, and other requirements as projects are built.
- e. Where possible, the parking lot should not be located between the building it serves and a pedestrian-oriented street. An exception may be when a parking lot can serve to preserve a view corridor.

DT 1.2 The goal of zoning and design review is to encourage the Downtown to develop in a compact and pedestrian-oriented manner.

- a. Site plans, building designs and landscaping should be designed so as to create a friendly environment for pedestrians.
- b. Building and landscaping layout should be conducive to safety and minimize crime or accident potential.
- c. Where conflicts occur, the city will encourage, through public investment and zoning controls, a preference for pedestrian circulation over auto traffic.
- d. Urban design should encourage pleasantly diverse activity extending to evenings and weekends.
- e. Urban design should promote the Downtown as an activity hub for sociable use, including retail, cultural events, entertainment, a mix of professional services, and tourism.

DT 1.3 Zoning and design guidelines will address the following principles:

- a. The design and siting of tall Downtown buildings should permit an adequate flow of sunlight and air to the street level.
- b. Buildings should not face the sidewalk with blank walls that make the Downtown dull to explore. The street wall on designated "pedestrian streets" should have a high proportion of clear glass at street level so that pedestrians can look inside.
- c. Large buildings should not have blank bottoms with lobbies that are usually empty. Instead they should have stores, restaurants, and other people-oriented activities at their street-level floors.

- d. Along streets that are to be primarily pedestrian-oriented, the first two or three stories of tall buildings should be placed next to the sidewalk, and the first floor filled with shops and other people-oriented activities. Small, well-landscaped plazas bordered by stores and restaurants should also be encouraged. Large barren plazas should be discouraged. Garage and parking lot entrances should be separated so that pedestrians are not forced to run a gantlet of cars, roadways and fumes. They should be placed on the block's least busy sidewalks, where possible. On pedestrian-oriented streets, a majority of the street frontage should be occupied by people-oriented activities. Drive-in auto facilities should be limited to the vicinity of the Plum Street interchange. Well-designed parking garages would be appropriate anywhere in the Downtown.
- e. Landscaping and wider sidewalks should be encouraged, especially on streets with heavy traffic. A coordinated pattern of street trees, special paving patterns, and low-level lighting should be established as a unifying element in the Downtown.
- f. Marquees, awnings and other forms of rain protection should be encouraged. On historic buildings, awnings should be of a style similar to that which had been used on the particular building in earlier periods, and placed in a manner so that architectural features will not be obscured. [Also see Olympia Comprehensive Plan.]
- g. The design of new buildings or renovations should be compatible with the established pattern, alignment, size and shape of existing buildings. This is especially critical when developing next to a historically significant building designated in the pivotal, primary, or secondary category established by the Heritage Commission. [See Olympia Comprehensive Plan.]
- h. The restoration or renovation of historic buildings should restore or retain as many historic features as possible. Original proportions, dimensions and elements should be maintained or restored wherever possible. Cleaning of historic buildings should be done in such a way as to preserve the building material. Paint colors chosen for historic buildings should coordinate the whole building facade and be compatible with surrounding buildings. [Also see Olympia Comprehensive Plan.]

DT 1.4 It shall be the policy of the City of Olympia to allow, in some instances, through written agreement, the use of city rights-of-way for private purposes. Private use of the right-of-way may include air rights leases and ground leases. When considering proposals for private use of right-of-way, the following criteria shall be considered:

- a. The use is in the best interest of the public in a City-wide context and the use offers some intrinsic value to the public such as enhanced weather protection for pedestrians, increased view potential and/or enhanced pedestrian access/safety. Lease of public right-of-way shall be set at fair market value.
- b. There is adequate right-of-way available so that the private use will not detract from the present or projected public use of the right-of-way with regard to physical or visual access.
- c. Private use of City rights-of-way shall be considered to be most appropriate in the central waterfront area, in particular as an element of projects where a development site may include little or no dry land area and/or such right-of-way

- d. use would help to reduce the amount of over-water development required.
- e. Lease of right-of-way shall be considered when vacation of the right-of-way is deemed not to be in the public interest.
- f. Lease of a right-of-way shall not be allowed for the provision of additional development coverage.
- g. Private use of rights-of-way shall be discouraged. Vacation or private use of alleys should only occur after careful consideration of the placement of utilities and services, circulation, and potential for pedestrian use.

DT 1.5 The City should consider offering development bonuses as an incentive for developers to design public amenities into their projects. The magnitude of the development bonus should be based on the magnitude of the public benefit.

DT 1.6 Whenever the opportunity presents itself, as through new development, redevelopment, or major right-of-way improvements, utility lines should be relocated below ground.

Downtown Child Care Services

Background. Many communities are examining the quality and adequacy of safe, convenient and economical day-care services. The idea of providing day care in or near the work place is one method that is beginning to spark interest and gain support. There are a number of land use policies and regulations that the City can use to promote day care. Other factors affecting the provision of day care services include: the willingness of employers to provide on-site day-care services, compensation to employees for child care as part of a benefits package and the choice of environment parents want for their children.

Certain state requirements make it difficult--though not impossible--to provide day-care centers in the more fully-developed city center. Specifically, these constraints relate to Department of Social and Health Services requirements for outdoor play space and State Fire Marshal requirements restricting the placement of day-care centers to first floor areas for centers providing care for children under a certain age. Changes to these are available only through state administrative and legislative processes.

Recommendations. Some positive steps the City can take to promote day care both Downtown and city-wide are:

1. The City should build in mechanisms for private development to help meet child care needs of the community.
2. The City should prepare and distribute informational materials outlining City regulations such as fire codes, building codes, and zoning regulations. These guidelines must be written in clear, understandable language.
3. The City could coordinate with day-care sponsors and private property owners to provide assistance in site selection options and alternatives.
4. The City should maintain zoning regulations which enable provision of licensed day care services in both residential and commercial districts.

Landscaping

Introduction. One of the great benefits of living in the Puget Sound country is the opportunity to enjoy the wide variety of plants that thrive in our mild maritime climate. From the oaks on Legion Way, to the maples of Sylvester Park, to the cherry blossoms that ring Capitol Lake, landscaping features add grace to our city, in keeping with Olympia's exquisite natural setting.

In 1983, the City planted street trees along Capitol Way from the State Campus to the City Center, to help tie the two areas together and provide a more inviting environment for pedestrians. Beginning in 1992, such plantings have been made annually. Planting a tree is making an investment in the future, one which may take quite some time to mature, but one which will ultimately pay handsome dividends. Street trees impart richness, scale, softness, and interest to a city. They add beauty and value to neighborhoods. This Downtown Plan recommends that Olympia continue its tradition of improving the City with landscaping by establishing a specific Downtown landscaping plan as part of a City-wide landscaping ordinance.

Goals and Policies

GOAL DT2. To improve the appearance of the Downtown through landscaping, as a means of strengthening it as a center of urban activity.

POLICIES:

DT 2.1 The City will maintain a strong street tree program.

DT 2.2 The City will provide for a more interesting Downtown appearance through any or all of the following:

- a. Landscaped ground
- b. Street trees
- c. Planters and baskets
- d. Banners
- e. Community gardens
- f. Other decorative improvements as may be appropriate.

Principles for a Landscaping Ordinance. The Downtown landscaping plan and ordinance should maintain the following features:

1. The intent or purpose of the landscaping requirements should be specified. Interpretation will be easier for both applicants and administrators if there is a common understanding of the design opportunity which the landscaping is intended to address.
2. It should define landscaping location criteria--i.e., what percentage of the site should be put into landscaping and where on the site. For example, the perimeter of any parking lot should be landscaped with evergreen materials at least to headlight level, except where that would cause a hazard at entrances and exits.
3. The genus, species, and varieties of acceptable plants should be defined. Some plants are well adapted to our climate, while others are not. Some have invasive roots that cause major maintenance problems on storm drains and sewers--existing prohibitions against those species should continue. Consideration should be given to using native, disease-resistant species,

planting to attract wildlife and the creation of "urban orchards". To tie neighborhoods together, some cities specify particular species of trees to be used on certain streets, a technique that has worked beautifully here with the oaks along Legion Way and the cherries along Columbia and Water Streets south of the Capitol Campus. We should consider such an approach for key Downtown streets. An inventory of existing street trees should be conducted to help do this task. Outstanding existing specimens should be preserved.

4. The density and the scale of the plantings required should be specified so that applicants can know from the beginning what to expect and plan accordingly.
5. Public and private responsibilities should be clearly delineated. In some circumstances the City will plant and maintain trees and shrubs, while in others it will be the responsibility of the property owner.
6. Planting and maintenance performance requirements should be specified so that plants will remain alive and healthy, not sick and dying. Irrigation systems should be required in all public developments where necessary. Public trees that will receive holiday lights should have electrical outlets available.
7. The landscaping standards should be coordinated with the design guidelines so that the landscaping and architectural elements of the Downtown work together.
 - a. Administrative procedures should be designed so that:
 - b. Review of applications is conducted as a part of the normal site plan review, without added delay.
 - c. Inspection procedures ensure that landscaping is installed as agreed to in approved plans.
 - d. Enforcement mechanisms are established to ensure that landscaping is properly planted and maintained.
8. Technical information or guidelines should be provided addressing:
 - a. Tree preservation, planting, and maintenance, with information on trees in sidewalk placements.
 - b. Design and placement of underground utilities, parking garages, and other structures that could inhibit tree maintenance and growth.
 - c. How to deal with replanting and infill planting situations.
9. The street tree planting plan should take into account the possible impact on views, traffic signals, and overhead utility lines.

Landscaping ordinances and planting programs should not be instituted without simultaneously reviewing relevant City service obligations. It may be desirable to consolidate within one agency the responsibility for maintaining trees, putting up and taking down hanging flower baskets, holiday decorations, banners, and so on. Increased responsibility for street tree maintenance will require that the City have appropriately-skilled specialists on staff. For more discussion on this subject, see Olympia Comprehensive Plan.

Area-Wide Pedestrian Plan. One of the key goals Downtown is to encourage a pedestrian-oriented environment. To do so, it is an objective of this Plan to make the City Center itself pedestrian-oriented, and to establish key pedestrian links with other parts of the Downtown. Downtown street tree programs have been implemented for this purpose. When the way is interesting, comfortable, and safe, people will walk remarkable distances without realizing how far they have gone, as often happens when they patronize a shopping mall. When the way is tedious, uncomfortable, and threatening--as can happen along busy arterial streets--people simply will not walk. They will climb into their cars.

Establishing an area-wide network of pedestrian-oriented streets will take time to accomplish. This task will be much like the street tree program with which it is integrated: it will take several years to grow, so the planning and implementation should begin right away. Because the City will not be able to undertake it all at once, priorities will have to be set. The goal could be reached sooner with major financial participation by Downtown businesses and property owners.

Certain features should be incorporated into the design of the pedestrian plan:

1. Sidewalks should be maintained in a clean and safe condition, with broken or buckled sections repaired or replaced.
2. In key locations, the sidewalks should be in textured and/or colored paving materials, such as has been done at the Performing Arts Center on Washington Street. This treatment lets the motorist and pedestrian know that they are in an area where the pedestrian is favored. It also provides greater safety for the visually impaired. Because of the expense, the treatment can only gradually be extended throughout the Downtown. The materials used should be consistent with the recommendations of the R/UDAT Cookbook. In the most historic portions of the Downtown, they should be compatible with the historic nature of the adjacent buildings.
3. Street lights should be of a pedestrian scale (i.e., low level, like the ones in front of the Washington Center). In the historic part of the Downtown, the City should use the same style of street lights as was used here in the earlier decades of this century.
4. Benches, trash receptacles, and other pedestrian amenities should be provided in places of high pedestrian use. Such features should be consistent in nature with those in the R/UDAT Cookbook. In the most historic portions of the Downtown, the design and materials of street furniture should be compatible with the historic nature of the adjacent buildings.
5. Landscaping such as shrubs and trees should be planted along the route to soften the appearance and lend variety and a human scale to the street. Tree branches should be kept trimmed to allow adequate clearance above the sidewalk and the street.
6. In a few key locations it will be desirable to provide public restrooms. At present they are only available at Capitol Lake Park and Percival Landing.
7. Banners and flower baskets hung from street lights and utility poles should be provided to enhance the pedestrian and vehicular links in the Downtown.

The principal pedestrian links will be defined by a zoning overlay. They will help to integrate the various sub-areas of the Downtown and strengthen the four Downtown themes.

Landscaping Goals for Sub-Areas. The various sub-areas of the Downtown have different functions within the area as a whole, and the landscaping treatment in each of them should be appropriate to those functions. Thus in Plum Street North and South, the landscaping approach should reflect the role of Plum Street itself as the major entry to the capitol city. In the Capitol Lakefront sub-area, the major challenge will be to implement the North Capitol Campus Heritage Park, so landscaping should fit with that goal and tie adjacent areas such as Legion Way to the lakefront. The primary goal of landscaping in the City Center should be to enhance it as a pedestrian environment, with the historic Downtown core delineated by street trees.

On the West Bay Waterfront, the goal should be to coordinate adjacent properties with Percival Landing and tie that park and the Farmers Market into pedestrian links along Fourth and Olympia Avenues. On the East Bay Waterfront, future development should take advantage of the water orientation in a similar fashion to the West Bay Waterfront, so landscaping should perform the same

function: to tie upland development together with the waterfront, and complete the pedestrian links with other parts of the Downtown to the west and the south.

Finally, landscaping in the vicinity of the Port should accomplish either or both of the following: (a) create a sound buffer between terminal operations and adjacent uses; and (b) tie the marina activities on the East Bay together with the rest of the Downtown, such as has been proposed along the Esplanade. To the extent that it does not conflict with the goals above, landscaping should be designed to avoid blocking views.

In all sub-areas, outstanding existing mature trees should be identified and preserved.

Downtown Housing

Socioeconomic shifts in American society are causing an increased market for downtown housing. The average age of the population is growing older as life expectancies increase and the baby boomers enter middle age. Increasing numbers of singles and childless couples are looking for housing which has low upkeep and is near to urban amenities. Downtown housing appeals not only to young urban professionals, but also to grown-up, mature people (including single and divorced persons, and double-income childless couples), "empty-nesters," and retired and elderly men and women.

In addition, the transition to an economy based on office-oriented service industries is greatly increasing the concentration of employment in the downtowns of both cities and older suburbs.

In Olympia in particular, there is a potentially strong market for housing designed to meet the needs of legislators and lobbyists, who may wish to combine office and living quarters close to the Capitol.

Evaluating the Market for Downtown Housing. As with any real estate development, success in downtown housing development requires the right mix of ingredients. According to research by Real Estate Research Corporation (RERC), the real estate market must have four necessary ingredients:

1. A large white-collar and professional work force, as evidenced by substantial office construction. Olympia has this quality in abundance. More than 19,000 people work in the Downtown or on the adjacent State Capitol Campus, the majority of them in white-collar professions.
2. A recent history of successful renewal and new development--especially retail projects. Many renewal projects Downtown over the last decade have demonstrated the viability of the area. The Olympia Center, Farmers Market, and Percival Landing have sparked numerous private development projects on adjacent blocks. The opening of the Washington Center for the Performing Arts caused the renovation of properties on its block. Other properties, such as Olympia Downtown Square, and the historic Mottman Building and Chambers Block, were also renovated.
3. A concentration of cultural institutions and entertainment activities. Although not the only location with such amenities, Downtown unquestionably has the region's greatest concentration of theaters, restaurants, and live entertainment. Again, the opening of the Washington Center has given a major boost to the Downtown's cultural opportunities.
4. Geographic compactness and/or an efficient public transit system. Downtown Olympia has been forced to be compact by the dictates of topography. In addition, it is at the hub of our efficient transit system.

When these four traits are combined, they help to make a downtown lively. After all, the goal is to make the area exciting and desirable, to give it the sense of being at the center of action. In the words of the National Main Street Resource Team in 1985, the aim is to get people to recognize the Downtown as "a place to be." Resource Team Report for Olympia, Washington, National Main Street Center, April 1985. The feeling of identity and excitement is an important element in attracting downtown residents.

Even with the proper market environment, a third question must be answered: What type of development pattern is necessary for new projects to succeed in the Downtown? Not every Downtown location would be equally suitable.

Recommendations. First of all, it is necessary for projects aimed at middle and upper income clientele to have good residential amenities. Since Downtown land is expensive, development costs are generally higher than in other neighborhoods. Market rate projects will need to offer desirable amenities in order to compete in our generally inexpensive housing market. Such projects can be most competitive in highly desirable locations such as sites near Capital Lake, Percival Landing, Sylvester Park, and the Performing Arts Center. The City can also encourage such projects by constructing street amenities like decorative street lamps, street furniture, trees, and landscaping.

A second consideration is that most Americans who want to live downtown would prefer to live next to--but not in the middle of--a busy commercial center. In other communities, predominantly residential projects with some retail uses have succeeded. Predominantly commercial projects with a few residential units have had more difficulty. This implies that (1) City efforts to encourage housing will be more successful if targeted at locations on the edge of the central core, and (2) attempting to get a few apartments or condominiums incorporated into each new office building may have only limited success.

A third factor is that projects are more successful in locations where a residential atmosphere already exists, or can evolve as later projects cause a larger residential neighborhood to emerge. In the words of the RERC report:

"As additional buildings are developed, prospective tenants will begin seeking out the neighborhood; and all of the residential projects will benefit from the increased traffic."

A larger, better established residential neighborhood will also more successfully resist non-residential intrusions.

Finally, it is often necessary for city governments to take the initiative in getting the downtown housing bandwagon rolling. Developers are often hesitant to take the risk of being a pioneer. Olympia has taken several crucial supportive actions by investing in major Downtown amenities and by contributing hundreds of thousands of dollars toward Downtown housing. Other available actions the City should consider include:

1. Encouraging Downtown housing at selected locations through the use of federal funds, historic preservation tax incentives, and/or grants or loans to the Thurston County Housing Authority.
2. Offering incentives for office developers to build housing or contribute to housing funds, particularly when projects displace existing housing.
3. Using City land for housing or for mixed use projects including housing.

4. Making street amenity improvements in areas targeted for downtown housing, as an incentive to private investment.

For further discussion of strategies for encouraging housing in selected areas or for targeted groups, see Comprehensive Plan.

Conclusion. Compared with cities like Seattle, Thurston County is a small market region and Olympia is a small town. We have a relatively small housing market overall, of which the segment of potential new Downtown residents is an even smaller number. One hundred units is not an unusual size for a conventional multifamily project in Evergreen Park or other West Side locations, but it is still on the high end of the scale in our market. Projects of a few dozen units at a time are a realistic scale for Downtown Olympia, considering the challenges involved. But they will all add up. Over the last decade there have been many projects this size, adding hundreds of units overall. Cumulatively they have had a substantial positive impact on the Downtown, and have paved the way for more successes.

The Olympia Community Planning and Development Department, Advance Planning Division conducted an analysis of Downtown market opportunities in the fall of 1993. This analysis determined that over the next 20 years a goal of 750 added dwelling units was feasible within the commercial zones of the Downtown. An additional 250 could be accomplished in the Jefferson Street sub-area. This goal of 1,000 units--an average of 50 units a year--should be a minimum target.