

Community Values & Vision

During 2009-2014, the City and public engaged in a broad update to Olympia's Comprehensive Plan. The City held over 30 public meetings and collected over 2,000 comments from community members about what they value in Olympia and their vision for Olympia's future. These community values and visions are distilled below and reflected in the goals and policies throughout the Comprehensive Plan.

Olympians value and respect the intersectional identities and lived experiences of our community members, including but not limited to Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), people with disabilities, older adults, youth and younger adults, LGBTQ+, immigrants, and refugees. We believe that embracing equity enhances the livability and vibrancy of our beautiful city for all residents.

We envision a future where Olympia has a diverse and inclusive community, a robust and resilient local economy, with a strong multicultural arts and heritage presence for all to enjoy.

We acknowledge that Olympia resides within the traditional lands of the people of Steh-Chass of the Squaxin Island Tribe. The Tribe has offered these words for acknowledgement:

"The Squaxin Island Tribe's habitation of what is now Olympia spans thousands of years. The ancestral families who lived and thrived here named it Steh-Chass, and occupied prosperous villages along the shores. Archeological findings of ancestral artifacts in the area suggest habitation by Squaxin ancestors since the retreat of the glaciers during the last Ice Age. Today, the Squaxin people continue stewardship of these ancestral lands, from the Deschutes watershed and what is now Budd Inlet. The Steh-Chass (Squaxin) continue to call themselves 'People of the Water' because of the bounty of the region's waterways, which have sustained the people for millennia."

The City of Olympia will continue to strengthen our government-to-government relationship with the Squaxin Island Tribe to support our shared environmental, economic, and community goals.

We acknowledge Olympia's history of racially restrictive covenants, redlining, and displacement of BIPOC. We acknowledge that our historic population of Chinese Olympians, who built much of Olympia's original

infrastructure, were actively excluded through anti-Chinese sentiment and restrictive immigration laws, resulting in the loss of Olympia's once thriving Chinatown and a dwindling Chinese population. These institutional and systemic barriers are still prevalent and have resulted in a lack of equitable access to resources and opportunities. We are dedicated to rebuilding trust through reconciliation and making ongoing efforts to remove these barriers.

We understand that in order to build a truly livable and vibrant city, we must provide equitable access to the necessities of life, including housing, mobility, food, services, education, and meaningful work. We must consider the diverse needs of our residents in planning the long-term growth and development of Olympia. Giving everyone an opportunity to participate in the civic, economic, and cultural life of the city translates to greater quality of life and better bottom line benefits, resulting in a thriving and sustainable local economy. As evident through the Housing Needs Assessment, our community is becoming more diverse. This includes changes in racial demographics, an increase in the number of aging adults, and changes in the average household size and income. We will include both quantitative and qualitative data from our community to drive decision making.

We recognize that equity is essential to all areas of the Comprehensive Plan and are committed to working with the Social Justice and Equity Commission to implement an equity framework during the next Comprehensive Plan update in 2025. All future amendments should be reviewed for consistency with the equity framework.

Public Participation and Partners

What Olympia Values:

Olympians value their right to participate in City government, and to engage in meaningful, open and respectful community dialogue regarding decisions that affect our community.

Our Vision for the Future:

Through collaborative and open discussions, Olympians embrace a shared responsibility to make our community a better place.

The City of Olympia places a high priority on engaging community members early and often and regularly demonstrates how the voices of the community are heard. When issues come up, the City's healthy public participation process helps each segment of the community to understand the larger picture and the need to act in the best interest of the City as a whole. Olympia engages the public in major decisions through a variety of methods, including community conversations, public forums, and interest-based negotiation, and makes sure these community members know how their input was used. Because of this, the City has built trust with the community.

Our Natural Environment

What Olympia Values:

Olympians value our role as stewards of the water, air, land, vegetation, and animals around us, and believe it is our responsibility to our children and grandchildren to restore, protect, and enhance the exceptional natural environment that surrounds us.

Our Vision for the Future:

A beautiful, natural setting that is preserved and enhanced.

Olympia's unique natural setting will continue to make Washington State's capital city great. By working closely with surrounding governments we can successfully preserve, protect and restore the natural heritage we share.

As a result of this cooperative effort, Olympia will enjoy a dense tree canopy that will beautify our downtown and neighborhoods, and improve the health, environmental quality and economy of our city. Though our population will increase, our air and water will be cleaner and wildlife habitat will be preserved to maintain a biologically healthy diversity of species. Salmon will return and spawn in the streams where they were born. Seals, sea lions, orcas, and otters will roam the waters of southern Puget Sound.

Land Use and Urban Design

What Olympia Values:

Olympians value neighborhoods with distinct identities; historic buildings and places; a walkable and comfortable downtown; increased urban green

space; locally produced food; and public spaces for community members in neighborhoods, downtown, and along our shorelines.

Our Vision for the Future:

A walkable, accessible, vibrant city.

We envision a capital city of pedestrian-oriented streetscapes, livable and affordable neighborhoods, safe and meaningful street life, and high-quality civic architecture. Through collaboration with other agencies and partners, our urban waterfront will be a priceless asset, eventually running along the Deschutes River from Tumwater's historic buildings, down past Marathon and Heritage parks to Percival Landing and the Port Peninsula.

Capitol Way will be a busy and historic boulevard linking the waterfront and downtown to the Capitol Campus. By creating plazas, expanded sidewalks, and public art in public places, we will stimulate private investment in residential and commercial development, increasing downtown Olympia's retail and commercial vitality.

Olympia will work to create "urban nodes" of higher density and mixed-use development in specific locations along our urban corridor. We will encourage infill projects and remodeling of older structures; in turn we will begin to create a more walkable community, where historic buildings and neighborhoods are valued, preserved, and adapted to new uses.

Well-implemented neighborhood sub-area planning will help us determine unique neighborhood assets to protect and enhance; where and how to increase density and retain green space; and develop safe and convenient access to everything from grocery stores, to schools, neighborhood parks, community gardens and neighborhood gathering places.

Transportation

What Olympia Values:

Olympians want a transportation system that can move people and goods through the community safely while conserving energy and with minimal environmental impacts. We want it to connect to our homes, businesses and gathering spaces and promote healthy neighborhoods.

Our Vision for the Future:

Complete streets that move people, not just cars.

Biking & Walking: Olympians, both young and old, will be able to walk or bike to work, school, shopping, and recreation. Bike lanes and sidewalks will be safely integrated and often buffered from traffic along arterials and collectors throughout the city. Pedestrians and bicyclists will use trails and pathways built through open areas, between neighborhoods, and along shorelines. Sidewalks, both in compact, mixed-use neighborhoods and downtown, will encourage walkers to stop at shops and squares in lively centers near their homes. Trees and storefront awnings will line the streets.

Commuting: We envision a future in which nearly all residents will live within walking distance of a bus stop, and most people will commute by foot, bicycle, transit or carpool. Drivers will use small vehicles fueled by renewable resources. Electric buses will arrive every ten minutes at bus stops along all major arterials.

Parking: Parking lots for car commuters will be located on the edges of downtown, hidden from view by offices and storefronts. Variable pricing of street meters and off-street lots will ensure that parking is available for workers, shoppers and visitors. Short and long-term bike parking will be conveniently located. Throughout town, streets will provide room for both bike lanes and parking, and will be designed to slow traffic.

ADA Compliance: Our transportation system will be accessible to people of all abilities and aligned with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Safety: Because slower speeds will be encouraged, and crosswalks and intersections will be safer, deaths and injuries from collisions will be nearly eliminated.

Utilities

What Olympia Values:

Olympians value a drinking water supply that is owned and controlled by the City. We want wastewater and stormwater treated effectively before it is discharged into Puget Sound. We understand and value the role that 'reuse, reduction and recycling' plays in our effort to conserve energy and materials.

Our Vision for the Future:

Clean, plentiful water and significant reduction of waste.

Through careful planning, improved efficiency of our drinking water use and rates that encourage conservation, Olympia will be able to meet the water needs of its future population. Our improved water treatment and reduced wastewater and storm water discharge will support abundant aquatic life in Budd Inlet and our local streams.

We will place less pressure on our local landfills, thanks to state and national packaging standards, local solid waste incentives, and the voluntary actions of our community members. A majority of Olympia households will be using urban organic compost on their landscapes. Artificial fertilizers no longer contaminate local water bodies.

Public Health, Parks, Arts and Recreation

What Olympia Values:

Olympians value the role parks, open space, recreation and art play in our lives; as these contribute to our sense of community, and to our physical, spiritual and emotional well-being.

Our Vision for the Future:

A healthy, fun and enriching place to live.

Places where we can move: The many parks and open spaces throughout our community will be key to maintaining the health of our children, and all Olympians. The Olympia School District will work with the City to allow maximum feasible public use of School District gyms and playgrounds.

Programs that support health: The City's work with school districts and local and state health agencies will foster programs that encourage good nutrition and exercise. These programs will complement other City regulations that are encouraging both urban agriculture and markets for sale of local and regional produce.

A biking city: Olympia will be continually expanding and upgrading its bicycle facility network and will see major increases in bike use, for both commuting and recreation. In selected areas where cyclists tend to concentrate, the City will provide separated bike facilities.

Olympians walk – everywhere: We envision a city in which all neighborhoods have sidewalks on at least one side of major collector streets. This, along with more pedestrian crossing improvements and neighborhood pathways, traffic calming devices, and enforcement of traffic laws, will contribute to a dramatic increase of walking in Olympia.

An arts magnet: The City will continue to sponsor and support music and art events and festivals, which attract residents and visitors from throughout the area. The City will take advantage of provisions in state law to fund art throughout Olympia.

Economy

What Olympia Values:

Olympians recognize the importance of our quality of life to a healthy economy. We value our status as Washington State's capital, as well as our community businesses as a source of family wage jobs, goods and services, and various other contributions that help us meet community goals.

Our Vision for the Future:

Olympia's economy is healthy due to a diverse mix of new and existing employment sectors, in addition to being the center of state government.

Because of our careful planning the Olympia economy will remain stable, especially when compared to similar cities throughout the state and region. The City's investment in the downtown will encourage market-rate housing, many new specialty stores and boutiques, and attract visitors to places such as Percival Landing, the Hands on Children's Museum, and our many theatre and art venues. Its work to strengthen regional shopping nodes, such as the area around Capital Mall, will provide high-density housing, transit, pedestrian and bicycle access, making our state capital a popular destination to live, work, play and study.

Entrepreneurs, attracted to an urban environment with an open and accepting culture, will create new start-ups in Olympia that diversify our job market and economy, making it less vulnerable to downturns in state government.

Meanwhile, on the city's outskirts, small farms will continue to expand. Local food producers will further diversify local employment opportunities and help local residents and businesses be less vulnerable to the rising cost of imported food.

Public Services

What Olympia Values:

Olympia residents value the protection our police, fire, and emergency medical services provide. They also support codes that enforce the City's efforts to maintain neighborhood quality, adequate and affordable housing for all residents, community gathering places, and recreational centers.

Our Vision for the Future:

Responsive services and affordable housing for all.

By adopting "affordable" housing program criteria, the City will help assure all residents can meet their basic housing needs. We believe this will contribute to a regional goal to end homelessness in our community. In turn, this would contribute to reducing the cost of City police and social services and make the downtown more attractive for businesses and

visitors.

The strong code enforcement programs that will emerge from community involvement in every neighborhood will help protect the safety and distinct identity of all Olympia neighborhoods.