

Foreword

The Comprehensive Plan serves as the city's guiding policy document. It provides a path toward the future of our community based on our shared values.

Background

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

This Comprehensive Plan reflects a major update which was completed in 2014 and further refined in 2025. It accommodates changes since the ~~1994~~2014 Comprehensive Plan was adopted and the changes projected over the next 20 years. ~~Over 1,500~~Hundreds of community members participated. Under the GMA, the City may amend the Plan ~~annually, and~~annually and must review the entire Plan and amend it as necessary every ~~8~~10 years.

Olympia's Comprehensive Plan ~~is composed~~consists of two volumes, the first of which includes ~~12~~ten chapters, including optional chapters. The second volume is the capital facilities element, including a ~~6~~six-year financial plan for capital projects that is updated ~~annually~~regularly. The plan should be read as a whole, ~~as because~~ topics are interrelated ~~yet are~~and typically addressed within a single chapter to avoid repetition. Thus, these chapters are only for organizing the plan's content. They do not reflect the structure of the City's government or any particular model of city planning.

The GMA establishes required elements that must be contained in all Comprehensive Plans. In the Growth Management statute, these mandatory elements are listed under RCW 36.70A.070 in the following order:

1. Land Use
2. Housing
3. Capital Facilities
4. Utilities
5. Rural Element (for non-urban lands, counties only)
6. Transportation
7. Economic Development¹
8. Parks and Recreation¹
- 8.9. Climate Change and Resiliency

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

Comprehensive Plan Chapter	Description	GMA-Required Elements Addressed
Volume 1:		
Introduction	Overview of the Plan and its setting ²	N/A
Community Values and Vision	Summary of the foundations of the Plan	Include a vision for the community at the end of the 20-year planning period; identify community values derived from public participation processes.
Public Participation and Partners	Description of the relationship between the City government and others who implement the Plan	Not a formal GMA element; does meet requirements of RCW 36.70A.035, 36.70A.130 and 36.70A.140
<u>Climate Action and Resilience</u>	<u>Addresses reducing greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled (with supporting land use measures); improves climate preparedness, response, and recovery efforts to enhance resiliency and avoids the adverse impacts of climate change; prioritizes environmental justice and avoids creating or worsening localized climate impacts on vulnerable populations and overburdened communities.</u>	<u>Climate Change and Resiliency (elements a-e), addressed in multiple chapters</u>
Natural Environment	Focused <u>Focuses</u> on elements of the community's environment that were not built by people; it includes the City's shoreline goals and policies, and addresses means of reducing land use impacts on the natural environment, such as urban forestry	Land Use; also addresses requirements of RCW 36.70A.170 and .172
Land Use and Urban Design	Addresses the pattern and form of land uses addressing the pattern and form of land uses like housing, businesses, and industry, and how to ensure compatibility, blending and adequate space for each (a GMA-requirement). This chapter encompasses	Land Use (multiple elements); Housing (elements a-d); Transportation (element 6(a)(i))

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

¹Economic Development and Parks and Recreation elements are required only if the state legislature provides funding (RCW 36.70A.070(9)).

²When updated in 1994 and in 2014, respectively, an environmental impact statement (EIS) and a supplemental EIS were prepared. A new EIS was created for the Olympia 2045 Plan, developed in 2025. Those documents provide more extensive background information regarding the state of the community at those points in time.

More information about how to use this document is included in the Introduction cChapter.

Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan



~~View of the Capitol Building from Heritage Park Fountain~~



View of the Capitol Building

RESIZE THE PHOTO

The City of Olympia's Comprehensive Plan builds upon our community's values and our vision for the future. The goals and policies in this document provide high-level direction for actions the City and other community members may take to realize these values and vision. Goals and policies (including maps) also guide City budgets, master plans, development regulations, and other decisions.

~~As many as 20,000~~ Approximately 17,000 additional people are expected to join our community over the next two decades. This Plan is our strategy for maintaining and

enhancing our high quality of life and environment while accommodating expected growth and welcoming new community members. Most readily-buildable parcels in the City are already developed to some degree. Thus, over the next 20 years, we expect to see more infill and redevelopment of existing developed areas as we continue to urbanize. This includes more intense development in the three High Density Neighborhood Areas and additional infill in our moderate and lower density zoning districts (see Future Land Use Map in the Land Use and Urban Design chapter). This presents our community with opportunities to restore degraded environments, create vibrant pockets of social and economic activity, and target investments to make more efficient use of and improve existing infrastructure.

The Comprehensive Plan is not just a plan for city government. Developed ~~out-of~~with input from thousands of people in our community at different times over decades, the Comprehensive Plan truly is the community's plan. Many goals and policies call for coordination and collaboration among individual residents and community members, neighborhoods and civic groups, and city government. ~~As always, there will be challenges and change, but the intent is to build on the creativity and strength of our community to shape how we develop.~~The intent is to build on the creativity and strength of our community to shape how we develop, change, and face challenges for positive outcomes.



The Comprehensive Plan is based on community vision, and guides City and other community actions, such as regulations, programs and budgets.

Implementation

When developing our implementing plans, codes, development regulations and programs, we refer back to the community values and vision, goals and policies, and the guiding principles of this plan, as represented by six focus areas:

- Public Safety - Ensure that all Olympians feel safe and have access to reliable, compassionate care.
- Community Livability - Enrich quality of life and foster belonging for all who live, work, or spend time in Olympia.
- Environmental Stewardship - Preserve and enhance Olympia's natural resources.
- Economy - Promote a diverse and growing economy with pathways to prosperity for everyone.
- Organizational Excellence - Deliver exceptional services and programs that are responsive to the needs of our community.
- Well-Planned City - Plan for, construct and maintain a built environment that ensures the wellbeing of current and future generations.

We use these focus areas to help us stay the course and report back to the community on our progress on community priorities identified within each of the six focus areas. Annually evaluating our progress supports an honest and data-informed look at how we are doing and helps guide how we should invest our resources (money and staff time). This can include deciding which programs we fund, and what programs and initiatives are implemented as a priority each year. Annual City Council priorities and investments are identified in the City Council Work Plan and shared on the City's Budget and Performance webpage. Actions in the work plan may take a variety of forms ranging from large construction projects to the creation of new guiding documents and plans.

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

How to Use this Document

Chapters

This Comprehensive Plan is separated into two volumes: ~~t.~~ The first ~~with ten contains~~ 12 chapters, and the second ~~volume, which~~ is the Capital Facilities Plan.

Volume I:

1. Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan;
2. Community Values ~~&~~and Vision
3. Public Participation and Partners;
4. Climate Action and Resilience

~~4.5.~~ Natural Environment;
~~5.6.~~ Land Use and Urban Design;
~~6.7.~~ Transportation;
~~8.~~ Housing
~~7.9.~~ Utilities;
~~8.~~ ~~Economy~~;
~~10.~~ ~~Public Health, Arts,~~ Parks, ~~Arts~~ and Recreation;
~~9.11.~~ ~~Economy~~ and
~~10.12.~~ ~~Public Services.~~ Safety

Volume II: Capital Facilities Plan

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

- The Land Use Chapter, in conjunction with Public Participation & Partners, Natural Environment, Transportation, Housing, Parks, Utilities, Economy, Climate Action & Resilience, and Capital Facilities, all provide basic policy guidance for City land use regulations outlined in City codes. They describe generally where various types of land uses should occur, how intense they may be, and how they are designed; types and locations of environmentally sensitive areas to be protected; and the general types of transportation, utility, and park facilities that are planned, including locations for major facilities. More specifically:
 - Policies related to greenhouse gas emission reduction and improving resiliency to climate change impacts are included in all chapters.
 - Policies related to trees exist in the Natural Environment chapter as well as under Land Use and Urban Design, Transportation, Utilities, and even Economy.
 - Policies related to walk-ability are included under both Land Use and Urban Design and Transportation.
- Various chapters include policies that influence City services, including fire, police, affordable housing, arts, recreation, volunteer services and overall public engagement in civic affairs.
- Some efforts, such as eExpanding the Arts, Cultures and Heritage (ARCH) Profile in Olympia, are interdisciplinary by design. Policies that support ARCH are included in the Economy, Land Use and Urban Design, and the Parks, Arts, and Recreation chapters.

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

Goals and Policies

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

While some policies take a prescriptive approach by outlining what the City will specifically 'require' to achieve a goal, other policies present a more flexible approach whereby the City will 'encourage' or 'support' an action. Each type of approach has inherent trade-offs. Overall, the City's policy approach within the Plan ~~aims-seeks~~ to balance these trade-offs while meeting community goals.

As an example of a prescriptive approach, one policy requires land uses to prevent and treat stormwater runoff, which provides certainty that the City will use its authority to enforce practices that achieve our clean water protection goals. In order for the City to 'require' an action, it must have authority under the law to enforce it.

Sometimes a more flexible policy approach improves the capability of achieving certain goals. Having some flexibility over the 20-year planning period enables the City to respond more quickly ~~to changes in~~~~when~~ environmental or market conditions ~~change~~. It also allows for tailoring implementation to geographic or land use type conditions at the zoning level. For example, a policy in the Plan states the City will require development to incorporate measures that reduce risks associated with rising sea levels. The policy includes, as an example, higher finished floor elevations, but does not specify what that particular measure will be. In order to respond appropriately to sea level rise, the City will need an adaptive strategy based on new ~~or updated~~ information. The same adaptive methodology applies to policies regarding infill development. In order to meet our vision of a more vibrant and pedestrian-friendly downtown, the City will need flexibility to respond to changing market conditions over the 20-year planning period.

Where the City does not establish requirements, it may 'encourage' or 'support' actions. For example, one policy encourages the use of fruit and nut trees to support food self-sufficiency. This policy demonstrates the City's recognition of community support for trees that provide food, while also allowing ~~for~~ flexibility ~~for-in~~ implementation through incentives or partnerships rather than regulation. To require fruit trees at the broad Plan level could hamper other goals during the implementation phase that call for providing a variety of tree species throughout neighborhoods and planting the right tree in the right place.

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

always be considered within the context of the entire Plan. We strive for outcomes with multiple benefits. For example, the City will accommodate housing along the shorelines when adequate measures are taken to protect or enhance the shoreline and natural environment. We can add more housing in our neighborhoods while also increasing tree canopy and increasing the number of homes with rooftop solar photovoltaic systems.

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

Equity

Additionally, the City of Olympia strives to balance the Plan through a lens of equity for all community members. To build a truly livable and vibrant city, we understand that we must provide equitable access to the necessities of life. We must consider the diverse needs of our residents, business owners, employees, and guests as we plan for the long-term growth and development of Olympia. Therefore, the Plan should be read by broadly applying equity considerations in all of its goals and policies.

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



Beautiful sunshine display at Procession of the Species.

Implementation—The Action Plan

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

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

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

The Local Planning & Development Process

Local planning depends heavily on community involvement. Public engagement is essential for many reasons: ~~including that~~ it provides for more holistic perspectives on City decisions that affect the entire community and it protects people’s rights to participate in the development of plans and development regulations that influence

public policy. In fact, the Growth Management Act ([GMA](#)) calls for broad public involvement in creating and amending Comprehensive Plans and implementing development regulations.

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

Once a Comprehensive Plan is adopted, it may be amended annually, with larger updates considered every [8-10](#) years. There may be a period of time after the City Council adopts changes to the Plan before staff, the public and policy makers are able to take action to implement it. The City will make every effort to quickly and reasonably develop, review and adopt any new or revised regulations to conform to this Plan.

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

There are further opportunities for the public to provide input and influence site-specific permitting decisions; however, public influence may be more constrained at this stage. This is because site-specific permit decisions are largely based on whether or not proposals are consistent with established local codes and other laws. This gives predictability to both community members and developers, consistent with the intent of the Growth Management Act. [Community members are encouraged to participate in local government, such as by serving on an advisory committee or engaging in public meetings. This includes participating in Comprehensive Plan updates, master plan updates, and amendments to the City code – all of which are the most effective ways of guiding future development. Community members can meaningfully shape future development projects by engaging in the Comprehensive Plan and Code amendment processes because all future projects are evaluated based their ability to meet the minimum requirements of the codes applicable to the proposal. The development codes are a primary way to implement the City goals, objectives and policies as stated in the Plan.](#)

See the [Public Participation & Partners Chapter](#) for more information on how to get involved. [\(Note: UPDATE THE LINK TO NEW PP&P CHAPTER ONCE ADOPTED\)](#)

Context for the Comprehensive Plan

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

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

The Act defines ~~13 goals~~ 15 goals ~~, plus a shoreline goal~~ to guide the development and adoption of comprehensive plans. These focus on "smart growth" principles that maximize use of land and existing utilities, protect historic and natural resources, and lower traffic and housing costs. Fortunately, Olympia has been taking this approach for a long time.

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

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



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



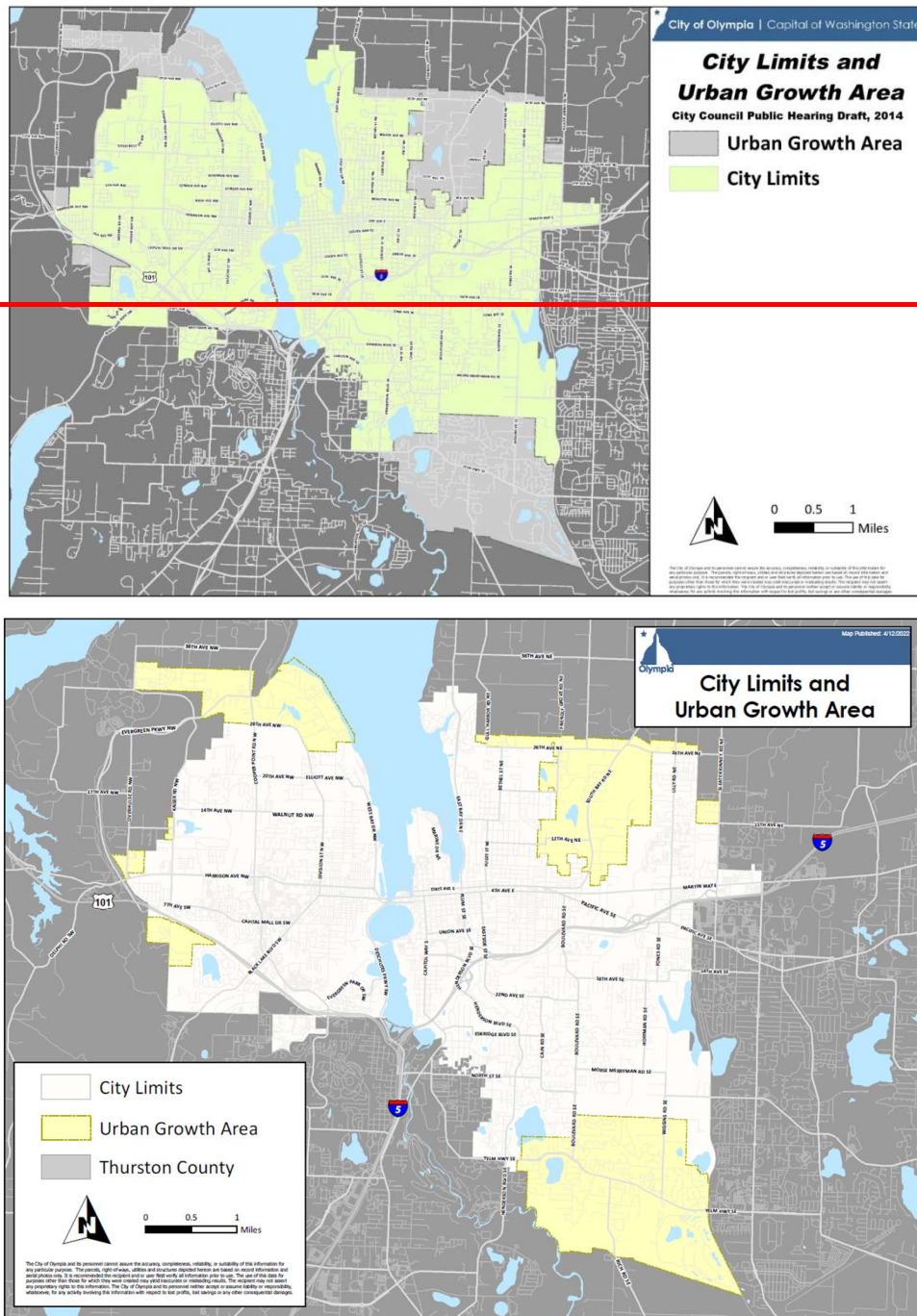
Community members volunteering at an Arbor Day event.

A Changing Community

~~Since the 1970s, the population and economy of the Puget Sound region has been growing. According to the Thurston County Profile [\[link\]](#), the county's population more than doubled between 1980 and 2010. Forecasters expect Olympia's population and employment will continue to increase over the next 20 years.~~ Our community continues to grow, as more people move here to live, work, pursue education, or start businesses or nonprofit organizations. In ~~2010~~2024, the estimated population of Olympia and its Urban Growth Area was ~~58,310~~70,860 residents. Forecasters expect our population will increase to ~~84,400~~87,650 by ~~2035~~2045, a rate of ~~approximately 2~~just over 1% per year. ~~A majority of this increase will be due to in-migration.~~ People are attracted to living here because we have a relatively stable economy, a beautiful environment, friendly and safe neighborhoods, good schools and lower living costs than our neighbors to the

north. Many of these new residents will work within the current City limits and the unincorporated Urban Growth Area.

OLYMPIA AND ITS URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARIES



Map of Olympia and its Urban Growth Boundaries

In 2012, Olympia's urban growth area **was** about 16,000 acres. This includes about 12,000 acres within City limits and 4,000 acres in the unincorporated area, which may eventually be annexed into the City. In cooperation with Olympia, Lacey and Tumwater, Thurston County has established and periodically reviews Urban Growth Areas. In these

areas, urban growth is encouraged; outside of them, rural densities and services will be maintained.

Much of the land in the City is already developed or partially developed, but there is still adequate room to accommodate our expected population and employment growth. This land capacity analysis can be found in the Thurston County [Buildable Lands Report](#) [🔗](#). Future growth will occur at various densities, in accordance with the Future Land Use Map (see Land Use and Urban Design chapter).

Preserving our Sense of Place and Connections

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

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



Neighborhood-scale shopping and gathering spaces

Olympians ~~expressed that they are willing to accept~~welcome growth as long as our environment and sense of place ~~is~~are preserved. That means protecting the places and

culture that we recognize as “Olympia,” even if those things are a little different for each of us. It also means focusing on our community values and vision as we grow.

Key Challenges

Our community will face several challenges as we move forward. These challenges are intertwined and must be addressed in a manner to eliminate or at least minimize potential burdensome impacts from being experienced more by certain groups than others, especially in regard to gender, racial, or economic inequality. We must ensure that we address and do not exacerbate any disparate impacts that are the result of past or present policies. We will need to balance these issues with intention to achieve the best overall outcomes. There are major global, national, and local influences that present both challenges and opportunities for our local community. Implementation of the vision and goals in this Plan will require creative solutions so that Olympia can:

Balance Protection of the Natural Environment as the Built Environment Grows:

Our community will change over time as we continue to grow and welcome new neighbors and businesses. We need to continue to work diligently to address the housing crisis by increasing a housing supply that is affordable to people and families at all income levels. We must also provide space for the jobs, services, and activities people need. We can do this while protecting open spaces and environmentally sensitive areas that make our community unique and special, providing connections to nature, and protecting the functions and values of the natural environment.

Sea-Level Rise

Take Action and Prepare for Our Changing Climate: ~~Over the next twenty-20 years, we will need deliberate action to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions while also taking measures to increase our resilience to anticipated impacts of our changing climate. Achieving our emissions reduction goals will require significant changes in how we produce and use energy, consume goods and services, and travel. However, we have the knowledge and technologies to address this challenge. As climate change worsens, we will need to prepare for, adapt to, and recover from acute events and long-term changes. Protecting our community’s health, critical infrastructure, natural environment, and local businesses from extreme heat, wildfire smoke, and sea level rise is a key challenges we will face. Together, we will strengthen all sectors of Olympia to build resilience to these impacts.—sea-level rise will continue to be a key challenge facing Olympia, and therefore a key priority. As the challenge unfolds, the City of Olympia is prepared to respond thoughtfully and competently to the threat of flooding in downtown. As the heart of our City, downtown can and will be protected.~~

~~Olympia has recognized its vulnerability and has been preparing for sea level rise since 1990, long before many recognized it as a major threat to waterfront communities. The City has consistently made it a priority to track the continuing evolution of science in this arena, and apply those findings to Olympia. In 2019, we published the Olympia Sea~~

~~Level Rise Response Plan with our partners, the Port of Olympia and LOTT Clean Water Alliance. The Sea Level Rise Response guide oOur ongoing response to the threatsea level rise and encompasses both long-term strategic and near-term tactical investments. The City of Olympia is and will continue to be a recognized leader in climate change and sea-level rise response.~~

~~Scientific information regarding climate change and sea level rise is , but the projections become more uncertain the further out we predict; and The exact estimates for specific sea level rise projection will probably remain remain uncertain so for some time. Regardless, we must prepare and respond. Forecast models for the timing and height of sea-level rise vary, but the models agree that sea levels are rising and will continue to rise in our region. rise is inevitable on a global scale. We will continue to work with regional and State experts to understand the potential magnitude of South Puget Sound sea changes.~~

~~Current science indicates that sea levels may rise up to 24 inches (2 feet) by 2050 and up to 68 inches (5.6 feet) between 11 and 39 inches by 2100. These sea-level increases will affect our shorelines during the peaks of high tides. Residents can anticipate higher high tides during the extreme tidal cycles that occur several times a year as well as during major low-pressure weather systems. A combination of extreme high tides, increased rainfall, and/or low atmospheric pressure can currently result in downtown flooding. This phenomena will become more common and frequent as sea levels rise. City staff monitors and manages these events and will continue to do so.~~

~~The need for heightened community awareness, education and response regarding sea rise will only increase in the years to come. The varied impacts of wide range of potential sea-level rise on our community and infrastructures necessitates that the City develops a portfolio of response strategies. The implementation of a particular strategy will hinge upon both the timing and the extent of future sea rise. Strategies will build upon previous approaches as climate change and sea-level rise evolve. Responses will be technically vigilant but not overly reactive. Processing and sharing emerging information will be vital to the successful response.~~

~~As the sea-riselevel changes play out, our downtown development and infrastructure can adapt. Over time we will mesh the changing natural environment with continued growth of our downtown.~~

~~Adaptive management will help us respond effectively and creatively to new data and changing local conditions. The City and our partners areis committed to this long-term effort.~~

~~The City's Public Works Department and the Capital Facilities Plan will continue to help identify and implement infrastructure needs. Work will focus on progressively building improvements that can help protect our already vulnerable downtown from high tides~~

and storm surges. Modest infrastructure improvements to address both current and potential future flooding problems are already underway.

The close proximity of our downtown to marine waters is not unique. Like other coastal communities, financial assistance from State and Federal sources will be necessary in order to meet the long-term challenge of sea level rise. State and Federal responses to local needs will have to be timely and meaningful. Planning horizons are long. A failure to appreciate and meet this challenge at the State and Federal levels poses a high risk to coastal communities. Our community looks to State and Federal entities for research, guidance and financial support to respond to the challenge of sea rise.

Sea level rise is a regional challenge. Many of us rely upon our regionally important downtown, its services and associated shorelines. Actions taken to adapt to sea level rise will require close coordination with the State of Washington and Port of Olympia, key shoreline property owners, downtown business owners and the LOTT Clean Water Alliance, operator of the regional wastewater treatment plant. Partnerships in our governments and communities will become increasingly important as we seek to implement strategies and responses.

As a waterfront city, sea level rise response will be a key priority for Olympia over the next two decades and beyond. In order to make timely long-term decisions, our community needs to understand the dynamics of climate change and sea level rise. The City of Olympia will develop, communicate, and implement strong yet adaptable responses. We are committed to a thriving downtown. We will work together.

Technical and planning information regarding Olympia's response to climate change and sea level rise is available on the City webpage.

Other Key Challenges

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

Become a More Sustainable City: As the capital of the State of Washington, Olympia has a unique opportunity to show leadership on key issues in the State, such as sustainability. The City needs to make investments based on an integrated framework that compares lifecycle costs and benefits of all City investments and to encourage sustainable practices by individuals and organizations through education, technical assistance, and incentives. These challenges are exacerbated by the fact that our community is largely built out. For example, adding sidewalks to places that do not have them to support different modes of transportation, is more complex when the streets are already there and need to be retrofitted. In many cases, it may make driving more convenient than walking, rolling, bicycling, or taking transit, even for short trips. Decisions made in the past continue to impact and challenge us.

Accommodate Growth: ~~Increased growth in Olympia is anticipated. Residents need to integrate the: quality of new residences, demographics, likely places of residence, housing typology, and prevention of rural and city sprawl. In addition, c~~Community members need to collaborate with the City to identify housing and service programs for increased populations of seniors and those who are homeless or insecure in their housing. Together we must find ways to add more housing that is accessible and affordable to the people who do or want to call Olympia home, while maintaining a variety of neighborhoods that people want to live and thrive in. This can and should be accomplished in ways that promote equity and social interactions for our community members. Such development must be served with quality infrastructure for utilities, such as drinking water, wastewater, storm and surface water, and a transportation system that offers choices between travel modes.

Equitable Economic Opportunities: There are challenges related to addressing jobs and economic opportunities in an equitable manner, especially for blue collar career paths. We will work with our community members, educational institutions, and businesses to ensure such opportunities and programs are available and accessible to all community members.

Integrate Shoreline Management Program (SMP): Special coordination is necessary to integrate the SMP with the Comprehensive Plan. Olympians value ample public space along their marine shoreline and waterways to balance growth downtown. Olympia supports the efforts to restore the shoreline of Capitol Lake to the Deschutes Estuary.

Revitalize Support Our Downtown: Located on Puget Sound and along the Deschutes River, downtown is the site of many historic buildings and places, and is home to many theatres, galleries, and unique shops as well as the State Capitol. At the same time, Olympia's downtown has yet to fully become the walkable, comfortable place the community desires. To add vibrancy while retaining our desired small town feelsense of belonging and social connection will require more downtown residents, better amenities, attractive public spaces, green space, thriving local businesses, accessible mobility improvements, and integrated standards for welcoming design.

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

Address Climate Change: ~~The impetus of the sea level rise challenge described above is climate change. Rising global greenhouse gas emissionsThe are contributing to net warming of the earth's atmosphere from the combustion of fossil fuels and~~

~~increased greenhouse gas emissions leads to more intense and frequent weather events, the melting of the polar ice caps, rising sea levels and more frequent extreme weather events. Olympia is expected to experience hotter and drier summers, and more intense rainfall in the winter. The City of Olympia is committed to working with the public and other regional partners to take actions that will reduce our community's overall greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for, adapt to, and withstand the changing climate.~~

Public Safety: All Olympians and visitors to our community deserve to feel safe and have access to reliable, compassionate care. We must maintain public safety and enhance preparedness for evolving conditions and future emergencies.

Fund a Long-Term Vision: We must identify funding strategies, explore operating efficiencies, and develop partnerships to provide the diversity and flexibility to fund our vision. The economy fluctuates and funding circumstances change. This affects our ability to carry out planned actions over the years. Present resources are already stretched thin, and there is little ability to take on new programs without new revenue sources. Cities face, and will continue to face, challenges associated with declining revenues due to state laws and policies. ~~We must identify funding strategies, explore operating efficiencies and develop partnerships to provide the diversity and flexibility to fund our vision.~~





~~Young Olympians working together to plant a tree.~~



People enjoying a sunny day along the waterfront.

For More Information

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