



Introduction (Amy Buckler, Senior Planner)

Overview of the importance of the Downtown Strategy (DTS), how it was formed and the final review steps leading to adoption.

DTS Elements (John Owen, MAKERS)

Overview of each element of the DTS: the key issues and actions. Each element is described below.

1. **Land Use:** A Thriving Multifunctional Urban Center

Downtown Olympia is the urban hub of Thurston County. It is important that Downtown achieve a greater concentration and mix of uses in order to support transit, the efficient use of land and infrastructure, and a vibrant, diverse social and economic environment. The DTS Land Use chapter focuses on the development regulations and other City actions that implement land use and development goals.

2. **Development Tool Box:** Feasible Development Opportunities to Further Community Goals

To implement the DTS the City needs a set of “development incentive tools” (tools) such as funding sources, financial mechanisms, regulatory measures, programs and collaborative activities. The report includes a “tool box” describing 48 tools available to the City and its partners to support a variety of goals, such as: housing options for citizens with a range of incomes/needs, reuse of existing buildings, street/sidewalk improvements, sea level rise response, businesses assistance and historic preservation. Many of these tools are already used by the City and its partners. The DTS recommends priority tools to add or take some kind of action with.

3. **Design (including views):** An Attractive and High Quality Urban Environment

“Design” encompasses the visual and functional characteristics of the urban environment, including the public realm (streets and parks), private development, and remaining aspects of the natural environment. Far from being solely concerned with aesthetic objectives, design plays an important role in attaining functional, economic and social goals. The Design Element addresses design-related regulations, wayfinding and art, historic preservation activities, and view protection measures.

4. **Circulation and Street Design:** Multimodal, attractive streets

The fundamental concept of the DTS is “Connecting People, Places and Spaces.” To achieve this bold and holistic design vision, significant attention must be paid to improving and expanding multi-modal (i.e., pedestrian, bicycle, transit, vehicle, freight) connections to Downtown’s attractions and businesses. Recommendations included in



this chapter focus on near-term opportunities (implementable actions for the next six years) along with longer-term improvements that would help create a complete network for each transportation mode.

The recommended street design concepts represent an exciting change for the look and feel of Downtown streets. Up until now these streets have generally been designed using the same standards as other areas of the City. A new design palette will set Downtown streets apart, as well as enhance unique character areas.

5. **Homelessness, Street Dependency and Social Services:** Well Connected Partnerships

As the public process to form the DTS unfolded, it became clear that addressing homelessness and street dependency in Downtown is an overwhelming public priority. This issue is so complex that it requires special attention beyond what the DTS process could achieve. The level of homelessness Downtown highlights a striking human need and challenges Olympia's sense of itself as a caring community. As we heard, it can also discourage area residents from using Downtown attractions and businesses – or from considering Downtown as a safe and attractive place to live or invest. While much progress has been made to improve Downtown over the past 10 years, it is clear that until the needs and impacts associated with homelessness and street dependency are more fully addressed, Downtown will be unable to meet its full potential in the region. This chapter captures what was learned.

6. **Housing:** Livable Mixed Income Neighborhoods

Maintaining a viable Downtown residential community is an important regional objective. The City's Comprehensive Plan includes a target to direct ¼ of the city's forecasted population growth into Downtown. This translates to about 5,000 new Downtown residents living in approximately 2,500 to 3,500 new residences over next 20 years. New Downtown residents will help to create a livable mixed-use neighborhood for people who wish to minimize auto dependency, live close to work, prefer unique housing types, and enjoy urban amenities. At the same time, any vibrant downtown depends on local residents to support local businesses, provide a local work force, and generate 18 hour a day pedestrian activity.

DTS participants continuously expressed the importance of strong, resilient neighborhoods in the urban core and addressing housing needs for people with a range of incomes. The City does not directly produce housing nor can it control the housing market, but it does have some influence on housing production through a variety of policies and programs. While the City has previously taken several steps to encourage Downtown housing, a more comprehensive housing strategy and program is recommended to help the City stimulate a diversity of housing options as the area continues to grow.

7. **Retail Business, Community & Economic Development:** A vibrant, dynamic business environment that attracts people, activity and investment



As a capital history with a historic, waterfront setting, Olympia's Downtown offers a unique retail environment. According to a recent market study, retail opportunities in Downtown are expected to grow based on estimated regional growth, additional residents and potential for increased market capture in select sectors. While the City has little direct influence on the market, the City and partners can help promote an environment where small businesses can compete and thrive. Recommended actions to strengthen Downtown's retail and business environment are guided by these six strategic priorities:

1. **Strengthen existing & local business** so that Downtown's small businesses can stay and thrive as the local economy grows
2. **Improve the streetscape** so that Downtown invites more pedestrian activity, patrons and investors
3. **Encourage more residents** so that Downtown offers a more active and urban environment, more patrons and eyes on the street
4. **Improve identity and perception** within Thurston County so that Downtown attracts more patrons and investment
5. **Connect to other Community & Economic Development efforts** so that Downtown is supported by a strong local economy
6. **Actively promote tourism** so that Downtown is a well-known and sought out destination

Following the presentation, there will be time for questions and hopefully a hearty discussion with the Commission.