

Council Version: Includes recommended changes from the Planning Commission, Finance Committee, and the Feb 4, 2025 Council Study Session. Draft Climate Goals and Policy language included Feb 12, 2025.

Note: Goals and policies to address climate resilience and mitigation for the Economy Chapter are being developed and reviewed as a part of the Climate Element. These goals and policies will be integrated throughout all chapters of the comprehensive plan after the Climate Element is reviewed and accepted by Olympia City Council. To learn more about the proposed climate measures for this Chapter, please visit olympiawa.gov/climate2045.

Economy



What Olympia Values:

Olympians value a diverse and inclusive economy that offers a variety of education, employment, and business opportunities accessible to all. We take pride in our status as Washington State's Capital, our local businesses, unique places and spaces, and the creative spirit of our community.

Our Vision for the Future:

Every Olympian is afforded a living wage, with quality lifelong opportunities that build pathways to upward mobility and financial stability. Olympia is a safe, resilient, and welcoming city where affordability supports a high quality of life. The city's abundant community character makes Olympia a choice place to live and a destination for visitors.

Read more in the [Community Values and Vision chapter](#)

Collaboration with the Squaxin Island Tribe

Early in the planning process, the Squaxin Island Tribe indicated to the City which chapters are of most interest to the Tribe. This chapter represents specific priorities for the Tribe, and as such we sought their consultation and collaboration on its content, as envisioned in the [Accord](#) between both governmental entities. Any future amendments to this chapter should include continued collaboration with the Tribe.

Introduction

Olympians value an inclusive economy where all people have access to resources and opportunities for upward mobility and financial stability. While most residents have incomes sufficient to meet basic needs and then invest in other life pursuits, a growing number of households are falling behind and vulnerable to economic or financial disruption. For this reason, an essential focus for Olympia's economic development efforts is to create pathways that elevate more residents of all backgrounds and abilities into economic security.

The [Olympia Strong](#) Plan identifies challenges and opportunities for our community. It identifies major pathways and initiatives for building a thriving and diversified economy. It's built on the foundation of a 2022-2023 communitywide conversation on economic opportunity, following a multi-year pandemic disruption. We learned there are existing and profound challenges facing many people who are living here today. In Olympia, there is considerable economic disparity between renters and homeowners. Those who rent a home spend more of their income on housing, feel more economically insecure, experience more financial hardship, and are less likely to have emergency savings. There is also a confirmed link in our community between education and economic security. Diving deeper, we learn that those who are low-income, within certain minorities, or describe themselves as male or nonbinary, are less likely to attain essential continuing education.

The City of Olympia collaborates on economic development with regional entities from a variety of fields and sectors, including government, business, education, workforce, nonprofits, and others.

Our efforts fall into four main themes:

- 1) **Education and Workforce Pathways:** Fostering a variety of education and career training opportunities to ensure individuals have the skills necessary to access in demand and well-paying jobs.
- 2) **Housing and Sense of Security:** Facilitating affordable housing initiatives to alleviate the burden on low- and moderate-income families and provide them with stable living conditions. (See the Housing Chapter for more on this.)
- 3) **Business Enterprise Resources and Support:** Fostering entrepreneurship and supporting small businesses to create inclusive avenues for wealth creation, reduce reliance on goods and services from outside the community, and bolster the tax base we rely on to fund community goals and needs.
- 4) **Community Lovability, Pride, and Resiliency:** Investing in programs and projects that make Olympia a desirable destination to work, live, and play; and bolster our ability to respond effectively to physical and financial challenges.

Olympia's economy has become more diverse over the previous decade, moving from a significant reliance on government employment to growth in other sectors, such as info-tech, healthcare, and professional services.



Long-term trends bring challenges and opportunities

As we plan for the future, we need to keep these long-term trends in mind.

Employment Growth

Olympia is an employment center for Thurston County. During the work week, our population doubles in size as people enter Olympia for work. Based on Thurston Regional Planning Council data, we can expect a nearly 35% increase in the number of jobs located in Olympia between 2025 and 2045 (20,370 new jobs projected).

Top employment industries include public administration (state and local government), health care, professional services, retail trade, and accommodation and food service. Olympia's status as the State capital means we can expect a large, stable base of government employment.

While stable government growth serves a good economic foundation, employment in Olympia's private sector is growing with potential to boost economic gains, as the fastest growing sector. Healthcare industry expansion reflects regional and national trends. Olympia benefits from a strong healthcare presence anchored by providers like Providence St. Peter and Multicare Capital Medical Center, as well as numerous specialty and outpatient care facilities. The healthcare sector offers market stability while providing a wide range of employment opportunities across skill and education levels.

A growing and diverse private sector broadens the City's tax base, which is essential for maintaining high-quality public services for residents. Olympia aims to attract and retain businesses that offer living wage jobs and align with community values to support continued diversification. A strategic priority within this effort is the growth of company headquarters, ideally focused on green products and jobs. Headquarters not only bring living wage jobs but also attract supply chains related to the industry.

In addition to public and private employers, nonprofit organizations represent a significant share of Olympia's workforce, contributing to both the economy and community well-being. Nonprofits provide essential services such as housing assistance, food access, healthcare, education, and workforce training that support residents' stability and opportunity. They also create local jobs, attract outside funding, and build community partnerships.

Building on this diverse economic base, the City aims to encourage the growth of new businesses that offer high paying jobs that could lift more Olympians into economic security. In Washington, about two-thirds of all jobs will require a certificate, associate degree, or higher.

Olympia possesses very little industrial zoning to accommodate advanced manufacturing or other large employers. As a result, high wage employment within City limits will likely be focused within info-tech, healthcare, and professional services in addition to government. However, many high paying jobs, particularly in the manufacturing sector, do not require a college degree and could help broaden economic opportunities for Olympia residents. These jobs could serve the proportion of skilled workers without higher education.

The City will assess land use policies that could better support the creation of such jobs, including exploring opportunities to strengthen industrial capacity in ways that align with community values and environmental goals.

Olympia values the mix of job types available here and supports all workers, including those without a college or technical degree. Wages across all job fields, regardless of career choice, should provide living wages and allow those in the service sector the ability to live and work in the community.

Housing Instability

Renters and homeowners experience economic challenges in vastly different ways. Homeowners, even if they are still paying a mortgage, have seen incredible growth in home value over time. Additionally, mortgage payments are typically steady over time, so monthly housing costs are less likely to increase year to year. In times of financial stress, some homeowners may be able to access the equity that has been built in their homes. However, homeowners also face growing affordability pressures, including rising property taxes, increased maintenance expenses such as sidewalk repairs, tree removal, and drainage improvements, as well as higher costs for essential home repairs and insurance.

Conversely, renters are challenged by rapidly increasing costs, fewer available units, and home purchase market competition from non-local buyers and corporations. To many Olympians, home ownership feels, or is, completely out of reach. The costs of housing, utilities, and food are increasing at a faster pace than wages. This means it is increasingly difficult to meet our own needs and sustain financial security. Through the Olympia Strong research process, we learned that roughly one-third of Olympians struggle to make ends meet and are living paycheck to paycheck.

Challenges to Upward Mobility

Social service and education partners stress the importance of reaching children earlier to ensure they know what career options and resources are available to them. Many disadvantaged youth are not able to imagine what is possible and families may be unaware of the systems in place to support them. Many workers have limited options for upward mobility. There is also some risk that automation and artificial intelligence may lead to the displacement of even more traditional jobs. These technological advances may compound systemic barriers that make it difficult to prosper for those facing generational

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poverty, racism, or discrimination. Some individuals may not choose to pursue a different career path, valuing their current work, even if it provides minimum or low wage. All people in our community deserve to have secure housing and economic security. As such, we strive for living wages for all Olympians.

City Expenses Growing Faster Than City Revenues

Although the City's tax base remained relatively strong through the pandemic, expenditures are now exceeding revenues and are projected to continue doing so without policy or administrative adjustments. . Stable revenue is critical to ensure essential services. New revenue sources will need to be identified or levels of service reduced.



Industry Change, Supply Chain, and Labor Challenges

Resilience is being tested not only by the increasing cost of goods, but also through labor challenges and disruptions to supply chains. Supply chains remain vulnerable to disruptions from geopolitical conflicts, pandemics, and climate related events. A more localized supply chain also helps minimize exposure to national and international bottlenecks and transportation delays. Through strengthening local supply chains, Olympia can reduce its reliance on external systems, improve the availability of goods, materials, and services during disruptions, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with long-distance transportation. For example, Crown Beverage Packaging, located in Olympia, manufactures cans used by numerous local and regional beverage producers. In addition

to localization, promoting supplier diversity will help strengthen economic resilience through reducing dependency on a narrow supply base.

As Olympia works to strengthen local and regional supply chains, it must also respond to industry change and labor challenges. Shifts in consumer behavior and workforce expectations are affecting key sectors like retail, food service, and professional services. Examples include more households ordering food delivery, more consumers purchasing electric vehicles, youth are less likely to drive or own a personal vehicle, and more workers are migrating to employers who offer work from home options. These shifts have implications for employment patterns, infrastructure needs, and economic development priorities. It is imperative that the private and public sectors engage one another to ensure the workforce is prepared for evolving industries, and so the City can align infrastructure and economic development strategies with future needs.

Advance equity and help people overcome hardship

Olympia is committed to advancing a community that is just and equitable for all. Our economic policies aim to reduce economic barriers and expand opportunities for all community members, with emphasis on Black, Indigenous, people of color, LGBTQ+, disabled, and low-income communities.

We recognize there are fundamental inequities in our economy. Low-income and renter households, disproportionately Black, Hispanic, immigrant, and those including at least one person with a disability, face persistent economic challenges, which for some is compounded by systemic racism and discrimination. Data also shows us that single-parent households, immigrants, and people with disabilities especially have a harder time accessing the labor force.

Our economic development actions seek to advance equity in our economy so a wider range of people can achieve financial stability. Our policies and actions will help achieve this by leveraging community partner resources, directly engaging youth and dislocated workers to broaden career pathway options, continuing to facilitate greater housing security, and investing in diverse small business startups and local enterprise growth.

Advance climate solutions

Climate change will affect our local and broader economy in several ways, creating both risk and opportunity.

Climate studies indicate we can expect to see more frequent heat waves, storms, and flooding, which will heighten the potential for property damage, personal and business financial stress, and global resource scarcity. These factors may cause greater demands

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on the City's budget for sea level rise adaptation and other climate related investments, increased costs for scarce goods, and a decline in tax revenues during major local events. Vulnerable communities such as those who are in poverty, have low incomes, or lack a financial safety net, are likely to suffer the most. The City will develop a climate preparedness and adaptation plan that considers equitable approaches.

Public response to climate change also presents opportunities for Olympia. The shift to a low carbon economy is underway, spurring advancement in technologies and growth of the green job sector. Fueled by strong State and local climate goals, we anticipate the need for hundreds of skilled workers, such as solar installers and electric vehicle technicians, to help us transition to net zero carbon.

Additionally, Olympia's climate adaptation values are likely to make us more successful at attracting and retaining younger workers. Affordability, access to quality job opportunities, and a strong sense of community are also major factors influencing where younger workers choose to live and work. By working with partners, the City can influence the accessibility of such job training programs for Olympia residents.

Creating a unique and welcoming environment in Olympia with ongoing focus on high density neighborhoods will benefit climate mitigation by increasing urban density and reducing sprawl, supporting the use of public transit, and increasing walking and biking.



Advance a healthy community

Economic development and community health have a symbiotic relationship. Our efforts to increase equitable access to education, workforce, and business opportunities aim to improve household financial stability and reduce poverty rates. These factors directly impact public health by enabling community members to access better healthcare services, nutritious food, and adequate affordable housing, thereby reducing stress and improving overall mental health and well-being. In turn, a healthy community fosters a productive and engaged workforce, attracts businesses and investment, and contributes to overall economic prosperity.

Social cohesion and community engagement are also important for the health of a community. Third places, places for community beyond work and home, are key to public health and wellbeing. Third places should exist as places for all Olympians to gather and thrive. First places (home), Second places (work), and Third places (community) need to be located around neighborhoods across the city with easy access. The global pandemic disrupted many traditional community gatherings and social conventions. It separated people from their workplaces, social organizations, and schools. These disruptions limited access to education, employment, and training opportunities for many young people, creating new barriers to participation in education and in the workforce. The City and community partners must support youth through investing in mental health resources, and broaden access to education and workforce development, such as climate related job training programs.

Goals and Policies

G.E1 Olympia has a thriving and diversified economy with pathways to prosperity available to everyone.

PE1.1: Develop and support partner programs and strategies that stimulate living wage job creation.

PE1.2: Invest in inclusive programs that reduce barriers and inequities so that all people can more easily access education and career training opportunities.

PE1.3: Invest in programs that provide youth with mentorship, opportunities to grow soft skills and leadership abilities, and introduce them to college and career pathways.

PE1.4: Engage with workforce development partners to ensure an adequate supply of workers for in-demand occupations.

PE1.5: Support initiatives that help diversify the local economy to supplement our stable public sector base and reduce reliance on goods and services from outside the community.

PE1.6: Seek sustainable funding sources and opportunities to implement the Olympia Strong plan.

PE1.7: Establish a regular schedule to review the Social Determinants of Health using local data from sources such as the Thurston County Health Department and the United Way of Thurston County ALICE data, to understand impacts to our community and to inform City policies and programs.

G.E2 Businesses and entrepreneurs thrive in Olympia and contribute to Olympia's economic diversity.

PE2.1 Foster a desirable setting for business investment and activity.

PE2.2 Diversify the local economy in a way that builds on our stable public sector base, addresses systemic barriers, and supports businesses that can reduce reliance on goods and services from outside the community.

PE2.3 Support efforts that improve access to locally produced goods and services by reducing cost barriers for residents.

PE2.4: Whenever possible, buy from local businesses to strengthen the local economy.

PE2.5: Support equitable business training and other programs and resources that create avenues for a broad cross section of diverse community members to access business ownership opportunities.

PE2.6: Partner and collaborate with West Olympia Business Association (WOBA), Olympia Downtown Alliance (ODA), and other small business districts and champions to create and maintain viable small business centers throughout Olympia.

PE2.7: Support the economic role of neighborhood centers by encouraging small-scale commercial activity, local business development, and complementary programs and partnerships as described in the Olympia Neighborhood Centers Strategy.

PE2.8: Celebrate Olympia businesses for their support of community goals such as sustainability, climate action, and equity.

PE2.9: Foster entrepreneurship through business assistance programs such as incubators, access to capital, mentorship opportunities, and other resources that help startups and small businesses succeed.

G.E3 Olympia collaborates with partners to maximize economic opportunity.

PE3.1: Collaborate with regional economic development partners and neighboring jurisdictions to develop and implement a regional strategy for creating a sustainable and inclusive economy.

PE3.2: Work closely with state and county governments to ensure their offices and facilities are in the City of Olympia, which is both the state's capitol and the county seat.

PE3.3: Collaborate with The Evergreen State College, Saint Martin's University, and South Puget Sound Community College on their efforts to educate students in skills that will be needed in the future, to contribute to our community's cultural life, and attract new residents.

PE3.4: Encourage The Evergreen State College and South Puget Sound Community College to establish a physical presence downtown.

PE3.5: Collaborate with hospitals, other health care providers, and regional economic development partners to identify actions the City could take to support the health care sector in ensuring public health and their vitality as a major local employment base.

PE3.6: Support appropriate economic development efforts of our neighboring jurisdictions—recognizing the entire region benefits from new jobs—and their role in fostering activities, such as manufacturing, freight transportation, and air transportation.

PE3.7: Collaborate with the Port in its role of facilitating economic development, while continuing to exercise regulatory control over Port development and operations.

PE3.8: Balance the Port's need for truck and rail transportation corridors, while minimizing conflicts with other traffic needs and land use goals. Collaborate with the Port of Olympia on topics that impact the Port's current and future needs.

PE3.9: Coordinate funding opportunities with other public stakeholders (the County, Intercity Transit agency, Port of Olympia, State of Washington, Olympia School District, and others) with the City's CFP for major infrastructure investments to maximize the impact of those investments.

PE3.10: Coordinate with the State of Washington on economic investments, policies, and other activities within Olympia.

PE3.11: Collaborate with regional economic development partners to prepare for future economic disruptions and emergencies and implement effective disaster recovery.

PE3.12: Explore partnership opportunities with the Squaxin Island Tribe that expand their economic and cultural opportunities in Olympia.

PE3.13: Support the Timberland Regional Library as a community and economic resource to expand access to learning, technology and workforce opportunities, and strengthen the downtown library's role as a civic and economic anchor within Olympia's core.

G.E4 Future proofing Olympia's current strong revenue base.

PE4.1: Support established industry sectors such as automotive, retail, healthcare, construction, food system, and professional services for their value in providing a graduated range of employment opportunities and essential tax revenues.

PE4.2: Periodically review major revenue-generating sectors and identify actions the City can take to help maintain their economic health.

PE4.3: Ensure the total amount of land planned for commercial and industrial uses is sufficient and appropriately zoned to meet expected demand. Promote commercial infill and a mix of land uses throughout the city by encouraging density and removing unnecessary zoning barriers, especially in areas designated as Urban Corridors.

PE4.4 Encourage businesses to export goods and services to regional, national, or international markets, but keep jobs and dollars in Olympia.

PE4.5 Regularly review the development market to identify changing circumstances that create barriers or opportunities for investment in our community.

Enrich Olympia's Sense of Place and Creative Economy

Olympia has long been a uniquely creative community with many cultures to celebrate and strong support from the people and organizations who call it home. This benefits the economy in several ways: 1) enriches sense of place, leading to greater pride and individual investment in the community, 2) increases tourism, bringing new dollars into the community, and 3) provides opportunity to grow jobs in the creative sector.

Olympians desire a community that offers a variety of entertainment, cultural, arts, heritage, and recreational opportunities that honor the rich diversity of the community.

“Arts” encompasses a wide range of expressions, including but not limited to visual and culinary arts, local artisans, live music, theater, and diverse live performances and festivals across various genres. We also know that employers and entrepreneurs often choose to locate in cities with a vibrant mix of activities and culture because talented workers want to live in such places. Thus, we see enhancing Olympia’s creative vibe and sense of place as both a benefit to those who already live here, and a way to attract quality employment opportunities and expand on Olympia’s reputation as a unique place in South Puget Sound.

Data shows that a sense of place—a sense of authenticity, continuity, and uniqueness—is critical to a community’s future economic opportunity. Cities in which residents report high levels of attachment and passion for their communities tend to have the highest rates of economic growth over time. Qualities such as a welcome and open feeling, attractiveness, walkability, and a variety of social events and venues all contributed to this emotional bond. Parks and trees, community and historic landmarks, and public art also contributed to this valuable sense of place.

Those same qualities that contribute to the strong emotional bonds many residents form with Olympia also appeal to visitors. Visitors contribute to our economy by shopping, dining, taking in a performance in one of our theaters, and spending the night in a hotel.

Downtown Olympia is the cultural heart of the community. It has a destination waterfront that attracts recreational boaters from throughout Puget Sound and beyond. It is home to a thriving arts scene, including the Washington Center for Performing Arts, Capitol Theater, State Theater, Olympia Family Theater, a burgeoning Creative District, and numerous events like the twice-annual Arts Walk.

Downtown is also home to the state’s largest farmer-operated farmers’ market. Adjacent to our waterfront, Olympia Farmers Market serves as a tourist destination and a place for residents to purchase local. This beloved community space draws upward of 350,000 visitors annually and serves as a link to a substantial network of small family-owned farms and businesses.

In addition to brick-and-mortar establishments, Olympia is host to a wide variety of events and festivals that enhance our quality of life and local economy. These support a variety of themes of culture, celebration, and community gathering, such as the Pet Parade, Olympia Brewfest, Arts Walk, Procession of the Species, Olympia Harbor Days, Juneteenth, Capital Lakefair, Port Plaza concerts and movie nights, Capital City Pride, and more. Most of these events take place within Olympia’s state-recognized Creative District.

The City's most recent investment converted the historic Armory facility into an Art Hub Creative Campus. And Inspire Olympia Cultural Access Program tax revenue, approved by Olympia voters, will ensure broad access to a variety of arts, sciences, heritage, and cultural programs and experiences.

But Olympia's creative economy is not limited to traditional arts and culture activities. It includes a growing volume of technology-based occupations, from graphic designers to software developers, engineers, and innovators, who contribute significantly to the local gross domestic profit and generate multiplier effects that spread economic benefits to other sectors.

The City will continue to invest in creating lively places and spaces downtown, as well as other locations throughout the City, fostering a local sense of pride and broader reputation for Olympia as a place of unmatched vitality.

Goals and Policies

G.E5: Olympia has a thriving creative economy.

PE5.1: Continue to provide equitable programs and services that support visual and performing arts activities in Olympia.

PE5.2: Establish a creative campus with and for the community that serves as a hub for community members, organizations, and artists to collaborate, and provides physical space for creative activities and expression.

PE5.3: Work with partners to grow an inclusive creative sector workforce and provide artists and creative industry entrepreneurs with training, technical support, and other resources to help them succeed.

PE5.4: Provide grant funding to increase public access to local arts, cultures, heritage, and science programs and experiences, especially for youth and traditionally underserved populations.

PE5.5: Create entry points for many diverse artists, creatives, innovators, and culture-bearers to showcase their work.

PE5.6: Invest in initiatives that showcase Olympia's innovative and entrepreneurial spirit and enhance Olympia's status as a magnet for creative economy related tourism and employment.

PE5.7: Help artists and creatives develop networks to grow the creative sector locally and regionally.

PE5.8: Support initiatives that make it affordable for artists and creatives to continue to live and work in Olympia.

PE5.9: Support and foster the creative economy by reducing barriers to adaptive reuse of existing buildings to help initiate innovative ideas and spaces.

PE 5.10 Actively monitor emerging technology and trends, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), to determine its impact or value to our economy.

G.E6: Downtown is a popular destination that contributes to Olympia's economic vibrancy.

PE6.1: Support a safe and active downtown that thrives day and night with many small businesses, great public places, events, art, and activities.

PE6.2: Support lively and active downtown parks and waterfront attractions.

PE6.3: Promote high-density housing downtown for a range of incomes.

PE6.4: Support street beautification efforts, like regular cleaning, planting and protecting trees, and installing decorative features to help encourage private economic development and redevelopment activities.

PE6.5: Support public transit to connect people with jobs and services, including increasing the span and frequency of public transit between the Capitol Campus and Downtown Olympia.

PE6.6: Use equitable and inclusive planning processes and tools to improve the economic and social health of downtown.

PE6.7: Collaborate with the Port of Olympia, nonprofit organizations, and private developers to support infill development that creates complete downtown blocks.

PE6.8: Pursue public-private partnerships to activate vacant commercial spaces, including the use of City-owned properties to accommodate a range of business sizes and uses.

PE6.9: Promote small business resiliency downtown by supporting pathways to commercial space ownership opportunities.

PE6.10: Encourage flexibility in storefront sizes to accommodate a range of business sizes and explore land use strategies that allow for adaptable combinations of commercial and residential space within buildings.

PE6.11: Attract regional anchor tenants and experiential uses, such as cultural institutions, educational services, sports, and entertainment facilities, that increase foot traffic and support surrounding small businesses.

PE6.12: Leverage the tools available to the City through the Downtown Community Renewal Plan adopted by the Council in 2015 to foster positive redevelopment in the downtown core.

PE6.13: Continue to implement the Olympia Downtown Strategy and update the plan every five years to guide short-term implementation.

G.E7 Tourism is a community revenue source.

PE7.1: Support continued investments in signature places and spaces, beautification efforts, and events to continually improve upon Olympia's diverse identity, natural beauty, and attractiveness to tourists.

PE7.2: Implement strategies to enhance diverse heritage, cultural, and other tourism opportunities in partnership with Experience Olympia and Beyond.

PE7.3: Support the development of fast, reliable public transit between Olympia and larger metropolitan areas to expand regional tourism access and increase visitor spending in local business and cultural destinations.

PE7.4: Enhance wayfinding systems to attract and guide visitors to key commercial and cultural destinations.

PE7.5: Support efforts to expand year-round tourism through seasonal events, festivals, amenities, experiences, and waterfront activation efforts that draw visitors beyond peak tourism periods.

G.E8 Historic resources are used to promote economic stability in the City.

PE8.1: Strengthen economic vitality in historic areas through the continued support of the Heritage Commission and planning to protect and promote our historic resources.

PE8.2: Celebrate historic buildings while integrating contemporary architecture in a context-sensitive manner.

PE8.3: Protect and enhance the City's ability to attract tourists and visitors through preservation of historic resources.

PE8.4: Utilize renovation, reuse, and repair of existing buildings when preferable to new construction, doing so in a manner that protects and enhances the resource when historic properties are involved.

PE8.5: Help low- and moderate-income individuals rehabilitate their historic properties.

Public and Private Investment

Olympia enjoys a relatively healthy economy and stable revenue base, making it possible for it to invest in public improvements and services. These include the Washington Center for the Performing Arts, The Olympia Center, Percival Landing, the Olympia Farmers Market, new sewer capacity, new roads, and other infrastructure. All of this makes Olympia increasingly attractive to private investors, which will further increase our revenue base and make more community improvements possible.

Adequate and dependable infrastructure is critical to our ability to serve residents and businesses. Our investments have improved our public spaces and quality of life, leading the way for more private investment to follow.

Private investment can expand our community's economy and strengthen its material prosperity. But basic infrastructure needs to be in place, or underway, in order to interest quality private businesses in locating or expanding in Olympia. For this reason, it's critical for our community to invest resources in capital facilities that will support a healthy local economy and its values and vision for the future.

Goals and Policies

GE9: The City achieves maximum economic, environmental, and social benefit from public infrastructure.

PE9.1: Use strategic public infrastructure investments to stimulate private investment in economic development and redevelopment activities.

PE9.2: Make decisions to invest in public infrastructure projects after analysis projecting their total costs over their estimated useful lives, and their benefit to equitable environmental, economic, and social systems.

PE9.3: Consider whether the public cost of new or improved infrastructure can be recovered through increased revenues the City can expect from the private investment the improvement will attract.

PE9.4: Identify and take advantage of infrastructure grants, loans, and other incentives to achieve the goals of this Comprehensive Plan.

PE9.5: Identify potential tools, partnerships, and resources that can be used to create more economic certainty for developments by advancing the assessment of site contamination, where such efforts serve a clear public purpose.

PE9.6: Identify where new and upgraded utilities will be needed to serve areas zoned for commercial and industrial use and encourage the development of utilities to service these areas.

PE9.7: Investigate the feasibility of the City providing telecom and broadband infrastructure, high speed internet connectivity, or other new forms of infrastructure.

PE9.8: Collaborate with public and private partners to finance critical public infrastructure, including but not limited to sewer upgrades, non-motorized transportation improvements, and street improvements to develop targeted commercial, residential, industrial, and mixed-use areas.

PE9.9: In coordination with development, serve sites designated for industrial or commercial development with required utilities and other services on a cost-effective basis and at a level appropriate to the uses planned for the area.

PE9.10: Avoid building lengthy and expensive service extensions that would cost more than could ever be recovered from revenues.

PE9.11: Encourage the use of public rights-of-way as a form of public infrastructure that can be used for economic and social benefits, such as street fairs, parklets, or other similar uses.

PE9.12: Explore the use of public financing tools, such as Tax Increment Financing, to support infrastructure investment and to attract private development in designated priority areas.

PE9.13: Support implementation of the Capital Mall Triangle Subarea Plan to facilitate mixed-use redevelopment, adaptive reuse, and infrastructure improvements that create jobs, housing, and services in West Olympia.

G.E10: The City has responsive and efficient services and permitting process.

PE10.1: Maintain the City's high quality customer service and continuously seek to improve it.

PE10.2: Improve the predictability and cost-effectiveness of the City's development review process by having clear rules and procedures and by eliminating redundancy and other process inefficiencies.

PE10.3: Create a review process that is easy for all parties to understand at every stage and that invites input from affected parties as early as possible in the development process.

PE10.4: Use proactive planning processes and tools such as, Subarea Plans, Focus Area Plans, and Community Renewal Area planning to define and develop a shared redevelopment vision for specific areas within the community.

PE10.5: Develop and maintain redevelopment standards that are flexible and cost-effective to enable existing properties to be adapted into new economic uses.

PE10.6: Support adaptive reuse of buildings through flexible code approaches that encourage the conversion of underutilized structures into viable spaces for commercial, mixed-use, or residential uses.

GE.11: Public and private investors are aware of Olympia's advantages.

PE11.1: Actively promote equitable and inclusive economic activities that are consistent with the values expressed in this Comprehensive Plan.

PE11.2: Market Olympia's advantages to local and out-of-town businesses that may be considering expansion or new facilities in the area.

PE11.3: Define a more active City role in stimulating development and influencing the design and type of development.

PE11.4: Continue to coordinate and partner with the Thurston County Economic Development Council, Thurston County Chamber, and others to promote Olympia's economic redevelopment opportunities.

A Resilient City

The impacts of climate change are already visible and forecast to become even more disruptive in the years ahead. Future risks include increased flooding along the shoreline areas of Puget Sound, more and faster moving wildfires, extreme fluctuations in weather, and more violent wind and storm events. The City has already adopted climate adaptation strategies and is underway with various actions to mitigate risk. But a lot of work remains to be completed. In this sense, there is also opportunity in the form of new living wage jobs and investment in green infrastructure and carbon reduction strategies.

G.E12: Olympia is well prepared to withstand future economic disruptions and emergencies.

PE12.1: Ensure the local economy is resilient to climate disruption and fosters business opportunities associated with climate mitigation and adaptation.

PE12.2: Facilitate a green jobs pipeline for frontline communities.

PE12.3: Support businesses in climate and disaster preparedness planning, including continuity of operations strategies for extreme weather and natural disasters.

For More Information

- Thurston Economic Development Council (EDC) is the City's primary partner for enterprise development and training and a key liaison for private sector partnerships.
- Thurston Chamber of Commerce partners with the City on business engagement and workforce training initiatives.
- Enterprise for Equity provides microenterprise training and support.
- PacMtn Workforce Development Council is the workforce training lead for a five-county region, including Olympia and Thurston County.
- United Way of Thurston County supports career pathway opportunities and poverty

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reduction strategies.

- Olympia Downtown Alliance coordinates a variety of initiatives and advocacy for businesses located in greater downtown Olympia.
- [The Profile](#)  is the Thurston County Regional Planning Council's flagship document that provides demographic, statistical and mapping information.
- [Thurston Economic Vitality Index](#)  provides both a trend analysis and a snapshot of Thurston County's economy based upon a series of key indicators.
- [Olympia Strong](#) – A Roadmap to Economic Opportunities
- United Way of Thurston County - Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed ([ALICE](#))
- NW Cooperative Development Center
- Center for Disease Control (CDC) [Social Determinants of Health](#) include healthcare access and quality, education access and quality, social and community context, economic stability, and neighborhood and built environment.