



City of Olympia
**Reimagining
Public Safety**
2026 Progress Report

Our Vision A Vibrant, Healthy, Beautiful Capital City



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Background

In February 2021, in the wake of civil unrest and community calls for social justice, the Olympia City Council responded with a community-led process to reimagine the City of Olympia's public safety system.

A Community Work Group made up of eight community members representing a cross-section of demographics, expertise, and lived experiences led an 18-month effort to understand how Olympia community members experience public safety. The role of the Community Work Group was to learn about Olympia's public safety system; deeply listen to community members' experiences, concerns, hopes and dreams and synthesize what they heard into a recommendation for the City Council.

The Olympia City Council formally accepted the Community Work Group's recommendations on December 6, 2022. The final recommendations include four guiding principles, five goals, 21 strategies and numerous actions.

Four Guiding Principles

The Work Group's recommendations included four guiding principles, committing that any decision or action taken...

- 1) Will not perpetuate or cause additional physical, psychological or economic harm to any member of the community;
- 2) Will be pro-equity and anti-racist in nature;
- 3) Will be based on meaningful collaboration and authentic engagement among everyone in the community; and
- 4) Will be based on the best available information and process will be measured and regularly reported to the community

Five Goals

In addition to the four guiding principles, the bulk of the Work Group's recommendations are broken down into five goals, 21 strategies, and numerous recommended actions.

Goal 1: Build trust and legitimacy in the City's public safety system

- Strategy 1.1: Center the City's public safety system on moving people towards wellness
- Strategy 1.2: Expand the role of community in the City's public safety system
- Strategy 1.3: Use data to regularly monitor outcomes and inform decision-making and strategies
- Strategy 1.4: Develop a healthy and inclusive workforce that reflects our community's values
- Strategy 1.5: Regularly and proactively communicate about public safety in Olympia

Goal 2: Reduce overall crime by addressing root causes

- Strategy 2.1: Develop and expand resources to address root causes of individuals engaging with the public safety system
- Strategy 2.2: Support successful community reentry and stabilization of justice-involved individuals

Goal 3: Acknowledge and correct the disproportionate impacts the public safety system has on marginalized community members

- Strategy 3.1: Work towards healing the community from harm created by the public safety system
- Strategy 3.2: Build authentic relationships with marginalized community groups
- Strategy 3.3: Develop equitable and anti-racist procedures, policies, and services
- Strategy 3.4: Expand and improve anti-racist and pro-equity training
- Strategy 3.5: Examine when and how to eliminate or significantly reduce fines and fees that are inequitable and have a disproportionate impact on low-income and marginalized groups

Goal 4: Reduce the number of individuals who connect initially and repeatedly with law enforcement and the criminal justice system

- Strategy 4.1: Expand the availability and use of unarmed crisis responders
- Strategy 4.2: Develop and expand pre-arrest and pre-bookings diversion programs
- Strategy 4.3: Offer restorative practices and transformative justice options
- Strategy 4.4: Expand the availability and use of therapeutic courts

Goal 5: Ensure the public safety system is accessible and responsive

- Strategy 5.1: Ensure the public safety system is accessible and supportive
- Strategy 5.2: Evaluate public safety system staffing levels
- Strategy 5.3: Improve the responsiveness of emergency services
- Strategy 5.4: Enhance coordination amongst different parts of the system, City and community-led response programs, and regional partners
- Strategy 5.5: Address conditions or situations that contribute to people feeling unsafe

Municipal Court and Jail Services Transition

Since the Council's acceptance of the Reimagining Public Safety recommendations, there have been several major updates to the City's public safety system, notably the closure of the Olympia City Jail and the transition of municipal court services to be contracted through Thurston County.

At the time the recommendations were developed, the City had its own municipal jail. The Olympia City Jail was used to house misdemeanor offenders. Built in the 1960's, it lacked many of the qualities a modern facility offers such as natural sunlight, outdoor recreation, and large open spaces. In 2023, the City closed its

jail and contracted with the Nisqually Jail for services. The newer Nisqually Jail facility offered the ability to house individuals in our care in a way that more aligned with the City's values than the older municipal jail facility.

Additionally, in February of 2026 the City transitioned its municipal court services to a regional model, facilitated by Thurston County District Court. It is important to acknowledge this transition and the immediate impact on availability of alternative courts, like Community Court. At the time of this report's publishing, therapeutic courts had not yet been established for Olympia with the District Court. Thurston County has committed to the Reimagining Public Safety goals and will continue to work with the City to move forward in establishing services that are in alignment with the goals and strategies of this plan. Representatives from Thurston County's district court along with the City's Prosecution and Public Defense presented an update to the City Council at a [May 12, 2026 study session](#), discussing the transition process, current services, and next steps.

2026 Progress Report

The Reimagining Public Safety recommendations were accepted by City Council in December of 2022. Since then, there have been periodic updates published on the City's website and the guiding principles and goals have been referenced in operational decision making, however there has not been a comprehensive update given to the City Council or the community on what actions have been taken across the system to move the work forward.

The purpose of this report is to provide the City Council and the community with a comprehensive update on the progress to date of moving forward the recommended strategies and actions within the Reimagining Public Safety goals across the City's public safety system.

Overview

Outlined in the following sections are selected updates from the five goals of the recommendations. To view a full detailed list of updates, please see the attached appendix. Within the updates, many actions with noted progress come from Goal 1 and Goal 5. When viewed holistically, the updates also fall into two major themes: strengthening and building relationships, and expansion of alternative services.

Through all parts of the City's public safety system, we also saw an intentional effort to build and strengthen relationships, and increase coordination with other partners in the system, service providers, and the public. Inside the City's public safety system, the Olympia Police Department and Olympia Fire Department have made an intentional effort over the last 5 years to increase joint training and improve coordinated response. This includes training on responding to individuals in crisis and active shooter training. Examples of increased coordination with regional public safety partners include the Olympia Fire Department's Assistant Chief of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) regularly attending the Criteria Based Dispatch (CBD) Quality

Assurance/Quality Improvement Committee, and the Olympia Police Department coordinating with local law enforcement agencies to establish a Special Investigations Response Team (SIRT).

Examples of expanded alternative services include the expansion of the Olympia Police Department's Crisis Response Unit (CRU) to include a downtown walking unit, and the Olympia Fire Department's launch of the Community Assistance and Education Services (C.A.R.E.S) program.

Goal 1- Build trust and legitimacy in the City's public safety system

The first goal of the Reimagining Public Safety recommendations is to build trust and legitimacy in the City's public safety system. The strategies for accomplishing this include regular assessment of outcomes, emphasis on wellness for staff and community members, and increase community participation in the system itself.

Strategy 1.1 – Center the City's public safety system on moving people towards wellness

The Olympia Police Department has emphasized the balance of compassion and accountability through the utilization and expansion of their Outreach Services programs like the Crisis Response Unit (CRU) and building relationships with service providers. There is also overlap with this action and the work the Prosecutor's Office has been doing toward increasing coordination within the system (Strategy 5.4). The Prosecutor's Office regularly connects with officers to collaboratively solve issues and recommend resources for individuals with a goal of moving people toward wellness and breaking cycles of repeated contact with the criminal justice system.

Strategy 1.2 – Expand the role of community in the City's public safety system

In 2024, the City Council accepted recommendations from the Social Justice and Equity Commission (SJEC) on Community Oversight of Law Enforcement. The recommendations included enhancements to the role of the Civilian Police Auditor, as well as the creation of a Community Policing Board. The Community Policing Board (Board) was established in 2025, with Council approving member appointments in September. In March of 2026 the Board had their first meeting with the Civilian Police Auditor and provided community perspective and feedback on the Auditor's first draft report.

Strategy 1.3 – Use data to regularly monitor outcomes and inform decision-making and strategies

In 2025, the Olympia Police Department’s data dashboard went live on the City’s Performance Measures web page, including data related to calls for service, response times, officer training, and Outreach Services. In 2026, the Olympia Fire Department also launched a data dashboard on the City’s web page with data on department response times, number of incidents responded to, and response reliability and performance.

Data is also a central part of the Civilian Police Auditor’s work in assessing police department use of force incidents and complaints investigations for indications of bias or racial profiling. Findings are included in their regular reports which are issued twice a year and are available on the City’s Police Oversight web page.

Strategy 1.4 – Develop a healthy and inclusive workforce that reflects our community’s values

Recruitment and retention of staff reflective of our community values has been a focus of both the Police and Fire departments. The Olympia Fire Department (OFD) has focused its recruitment efforts on local colleges with the aim of hiring staff representative of our community’s demographics. The Olympia Police Department (OPD) has attended a variety of recruitment events including events specifically for hiring women in law enforcement, and veterans career fairs. OPD has also focused on expanding multilingual staff with expansion of bilingual allowances for qualifying members of all their labor groups. Currently OPD has staff certified in Spanish, Portuguese, Russian and Mongolian.

Peer Support programs are also an important tool for staff wellness, and both OPD and OFD have grown their Peer Support networks in the past five years. OPD expanded their Peer Support team to include non-commissioned staff. OFD established their Peer Support policy in 2020 and has expanded their program to include 14 members. Both programs offer ongoing training and meetings for members of their Peer Support teams.

Strategy 1.5 – Regularly and proactively communicate about public safety in Olympia

Expansion of both formal and informal communication tools have been part of the actions addressed in this section by the Police and Fire Departments. The Olympia Fire Department (OFD) launched a Facebook page to better connect with the community around their work. The Olympia Police Department (OPD) also added a Facebook page to their social media presence, as well as dedicated web pages for information and data transparency related to the Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) and Flock Camera programs. The department ultimately ended the Flock camera program in 2025 in response to community concerns about the security of the program’s data and the program no longer being in alignment with the goals of the Reimagining Public Safety recommendations.

OPD regularly meets with community groups to share information and create opportunities for community members to ask questions and bring forward community concerns. The Neighborhood Policing and Outreach Services staff participate in a variety of neighborhood and community meetings, as well as host events like Coffee with a Cop. The Chief and executive level leadership team has also made an intentional effort to engage with community organizations and faith groups, particularly around community concerns like federal immigration enforcement activity and the City's sanctuary city resolutions.

The Civilian Police Auditor's contract also includes regular communication with the community about their work. In 2025, the City Council hired OIR Group to fill the role of Civilian Police Auditor. October of 2025 OIR Group and the newly established Community Policing Board co-hosted an open house for community members to learn more about their work, and share community perspectives and priorities with OIR Group.

In May of 2026, representatives from Prosecution, Public Defense, and the Thurston County District Court provided the City Council and community with a formal update on the transition of Olympia's court services and discussed future opportunities like establishing therapeutic courts for Olympia.

Goal 2 – Reduce overall crime by addressing root causes

This goal emphasizes reducing overall crime by addressing root causes and contains two strategies with a variety of suggested actions. Many of the recommended actions center around lobbying the state legislature for funding or State level reforms.

Strategy 2.2 - Support successful community reentry and stabilization of justice-involved individuals

The City's Public Defense is a current recipient of RCW 10.101 grant funds awarded by Washington State Office of Public Defense. Currently this funds a part-time Social Services Worker at 16 hours/week through mid-2027. This staff member connects justice involved defendants with services such as drug and alcohol treatment, mental health support, and housing support in an effort to remove barriers to stabilization.

With the City's transition to District Court there is now access to Mental Health Probation for individuals under court supervision. Prosecutors have the option to ask for individuals to be placed on Mental Health Probation, if appropriate, providing more hands-on support for individuals supporting them towards wellness and stabilization.

Goal 3 – Acknowledge and correct the disproportionate impacts the public safety system has on marginalized community members

The focus of the strategies in this goal is to address past harms, work towards healing and authentic relationships, and create a system that is anti-racists and equitable.

Strategy 3.1 – Work towards healing the community from harm created by the public safety system

Education around the disproportionate impacts the system has on marginalized community members is a central action under this strategy. The City continues to focus on education for staff to deliver systems that promote healing. Olympia’s Code Enforcement staff receive training provided by the Washington Association of Code Enforcement. Be the Culture’s presentation addressing “DEI as Customer Service: Evaluating Codes with Equity in Mind, Enhancing Compliance with DEI-Sensitive Education Practices” is an example of the types of trainings completed in the last few years.

OPD officers have also received training provided by the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission (CJTC) on a variety of topics, including, but not limited to:

- Introduction to the Historical Intersection of Race and Policing
- People First: Awareness, Challenges, and Response to Poverty and Recidivism
- Introduction to Indigenous Concepts and Culture
- LGBTQ+ Core Competency
- The Criminal Legal System: Structural Inequalities, Monetary Sanctions, Policy and Reform

Strategy 3.2 – Build authentic relationships with marginalized groups

OPD Leadership are investing in relationship building with groups not traditionally engaged with law enforcement. Chief Parker prioritizes regularly meeting with faith-based organizations, community groups, and non-profits to learn and create opportunities for dialogue. She has most recently met with the Islamic Center of Olympia, Temple Beth Hatfilo, PFLAG, and the NAACP.

OPD’s Community Policing team continues to host and participate in community conversations and informal events. Examples of informal events are the annual pop-up popsicle distribution events at Olympia parks in the summer, Cocoa with a Cop events at Oly on Ice in the winter, and Coffee with a Cop at local coffee shops and multifamily housing community centers throughout the year.

Strategy 3.3 – Develop equitable and anti-racist procedures, policies, and services

The Olympia Police Department (OPD) regularly reviews and updates its policies and procedures and holds staff accountable to these standards. Two policies of note are [Policy 320- Standards of Conduct Policy](#) which was updated December 21, 2022 and [Police 318 – Interactions with Transgender Individuals](#) which was updated February 1, 2024.

Code Enforcement has also been committed to an intentional emphasis on ensuring that all people encountering the system are treated with respect, including respecting chosen names, pronouns and gender identity. An example of this is the relationship Code Enforcement has built with downtown community organizations. In the past, Code Enforcement cases with one of these organizations relied on infractions to gain compliance, but by consistently placing an intentional emphasis on respect, including respecting chosen names, pronouns and gender identity, and relationship building, recent complaints have been resolved through voluntary compliance leading to better outcomes for everyone involved.

OPD has also taken steps to improve accessibility for community members including partnering with community members on development of the Body Worn Camera Policy and creating resources like the department's Deaf/Hard of Hearing Resource Card, and additional training on Deaf Awareness for officers. In 2026 the department also added Axon Translate services linked to officer's body worn cameras to provide real time translation of over 50 languages.

Strategy 3.4 – Expand and improve anti-racist and pro-equity training

One of the specific actions recommended in this strategy is to emphasize de-escalation and non-violent methods of addressing conflict. Deescalation training is incorporated throughout Olympia Police Department (OPD) trainings, for example it is included in all the department's reality-based training. OPD officers are also trained in deescalation through annual Crisis Intervention Training (CIT), Patrol Tactics In-Service (PTI), and Effective Communications. In 2024, officers also had the opportunity to receive specialized de-escalation training specifically for interactions with juveniles, in response to a recommendation from the Civilian Police Auditor.

Strategy 3.5 – Examine when and how to eliminate or significantly reduce fines and fees that are inequitable and have a disproportionate impact on low-income and marginalized groups

In 2024 the Olympia Police Department's Records Division partnered with the City Clerks Office to align the Body Worn Camera and Public Records Request fee structures with best practice and other municipalities structures. Changes to the fee structure included:

- Improvements to how estimated fees are calculated upfront for requestors, and;

- Clarifying who qualifies for free records requests.

The updated fee structure was completed in September of 2024 and better ensures transparency by decreasing the amount time it takes staff to process BWC requests.

Goal 4 – Reduce the number of individuals who connect initially and repeatedly with law enforcement and the criminal justice system

The overall goal in this section is to reduce the number of individuals who connect initially and repeatedly with law enforcement and the criminal justice system. There are a variety of strategies and actions in this section focused on alternative response programs, therapeutic courts, and diversion programs. With the transition of the City's court services to District Court, many of the recommended strategies and actions in this goal will be future opportunities in partnership with the District Court and other community partners.

Strategy 4.1 – Expand the availability and use of unarmed crisis responders

Since the Crisis Response Unit (CRU) team's establishment as City employees in 2021, the Olympia Police Department has steadily grown the program and its services as part of the Outreach Services Division. In 2023, the CRU team expanded hours of service to include swing shift operations and in 2024, expanded the program to include a downtown Walking CRU unit. The expansion of CRU staffing and services provided additional opportunities for CRU team members to attend meetings with stakeholders and provide education on what the CRU team can and can't do, and how to directly request CRU services.

Goal 5 – Ensure the public safety system is accessible and responsive

The highest percentage of actions addressed to date are part of the five strategies included in Goal 5 which centers around the public safety system being accessible and responsive. The strategies address conditions that contribute to people feeling unsafe, coordination in the system and with partners, responsiveness of services, staffing levels appropriate for community expectations of services, and the system being accessible and supportive.

Strategy 5.1 – Ensure the public safety system is accessible and supportive

In 2021, the City Prosecutor's Office hired a second victim advocate. Previously they were only able to provide support for victims of DV crimes. In alignment with the recommended action of expanding support available to

victims of all crimes, the additional victim advocate allowed the Prosecutor’s Office to expand their support for victims to include ‘general victim advocate crimes’ in August of 2021.

In 2023, the City transitioned to a contract with Nisqually Jail for misdemeanor jail services. Initially, there were challenges with ensuring that the public defenders could consistently access their clients that were housed at Nisqually in an efficient manner. The City’s Public Defense Program Manager, supported by the Olympia Police Department’s Operational Support Lieutenant, worked diligently with Nisqually to find additional avenues for efficient and consistent access to clients. As a result, there are now two dedicated zoom meetings scheduled each week, which provides public defenders the opportunity to schedule a confidential meeting on a zoom platform with their clients held in Nisqually jail.

In 2025 the Olympia Police Department’s detective’s unit launched an alternative reporting program for victims of sexual assault. “Seek Then Speak” is a confidential and interactive tool that helps adult (18 and above) survivors of sexual assault find information, explore support options, and begin the reporting process – on their terms. This provides a trauma-informed alternative that puts control back in the hands of survivors.

Strategy 5.2 – Evaluate public safety system staffing levels

Across the City’s public safety system, several assessments of staffing levels have been completed. In 2023 the Olympia Police Department conducted a staffing study which included recommendations for increased staffing levels. Based on that assessment, the City Council approved an additional nine police officer positions. The Crisis Response Unit (CRU) also saw an expansion to include swing shift coverage in April of 2023 and a dedicated downtown Walking CRU team established in 2024. An additional Familiar Faces Peer position was also created as a result of the staffing study, however due to budget challenges this additional position was never filled and needed to be eliminated in 2026. This remains an identified opportunity area for the future.

In 2025, The Olympia Fire Department completed their Community Risk Assessment and Standards of Cover, outlining the community needs relating to fire department performance and response.

In response to updated Washington State Supreme Court Standards for Indigent Defense, Public Defense adjusted workloads in 2025 by adding additional public defense case credits, increasing the case credit value, and reducing the number of maximum credits allowed per public defender. It is also responsive to the recommended actions in this section by ensuring manageable caseloads so that individuals and cases receive the time and attention needed.

Strategy 5.3 – Improve responsiveness of emergency services

In 2025, the Olympia Fire Department (OFD) completed a review of dispatch criteria related to Advanced Life Support (ALS) and Basic Life Support (BLS) calls for service. From 2024 to 2025 the OFD Deputy Chief of Operations also reviewed the department’s dispatch protocols and adjusted for the number of units and personnel responding to emergencies.

In March of 2023, the Olympia Police Department (OPD) worked with TCOMM to draft a response protocol for the Crisis Response Unit (CRU) team, helping guide dispatchers in utilization of CRU in responding to appropriate calls for service.

Improved responsiveness of emergency services also included expanding resources so that the response meets the level of need for community members. To this end, in 2023, OFD established their Community Assistance and Education Services (C.A.R.E.S) program, with the goal of supporting a healthier community and reduces reliance on the 911 system for non-acute concerns. OFD also began providing low acuity ambulance transport in 2024, creating an additional level of response to meet different levels of need from community members.

OPD also expanded their services to include Community Service Officers (CSO) who can respond to found property, assist with traffic control, and transports. The program initially included four CSOs positions, but in 2025 two positions were put on hold due to budget reductions. In 2026, those positions were reallocated and the department is actively seeking to fill the vacancies.

Strategy 5.4 – Enhance coordination amongst different parts of the system, City and community-led response programs, and regional partners

In alignment with this strategy, the Olympia Police (OPD) and Fire Departments (OFD) have invested in increasing their joint response training over the past five years, increasing the number of joint scenario-based trainings for critical incident responses. They also coordinated on establishing a new program and draft policies for Tactical Emergency Medical Services (TEMS) to improve their coordinated response.

OPD's Outreach Services, including the Crisis Response Unit (CRU) and Familiar Faces, have also intentionally focused on ongoing coordination with private and non-profit alternative and crisis response programs like Arrest and Jail Alternatives, Olympia Health and Recovery Services, and the Thurston County Resource Hub as examples.

Strategy 5.5 – Address conditions or situations that contribute to people feeling unsafe

The City's Code Enforcement Program has focused on partnerships with other departments and programs to address property maintenance standards and keeping public spaces clean. They partner with the Clean Team on debris removal. The [Clean Team](#) is a City program responsible for supporting general upkeep and cleaning in and around public spaces, primarily focused on Downtown Olympia. Code Enforcement staff meet biweekly with the Clean Team supervisor to ensure problem areas are being addressed effectively and Clean Team is supported in clarification of property lines related to clean up requests.

Code Enforcement also emphasizes education and working with property owners to address complaints through voluntary compliance. One example of this was a property where the residents were involved in a

domestic violence case being investigated by the Olympia Police Department (OPD), while also generating code complaints contributing to their neighbors feeling unsafe. Code Enforcement worked with OPD to prioritize the physical safety of the victim and allow them time to work through a protection order, while helping neighbors to understand the plan for addressing their code complaints with the property owner. Code Enforcement then followed up and worked with property owners to understand and work through the maintenance standards.

Future Opportunities

There were many future opportunities identified around data collection and application, particularly where there are limitations with current report writing and data collecting software. The Police Department is actively pursuing a new records management system that would be more flexible in allowing the department to effectively collect additional data beyond the federal requirements, as well as more inclusive collection of gender data. The software is anticipated to allow OPD to analyze additional demographic information, such as Hispanic/Latino as an ethnicity. OPD also recognized that although there is already a mechanism in place to collect hate crime data, there is an opportunity for the department to provide more community education on hate crimes and how to report them.

Part of the contracted scope of services with Thurston County for court services includes the utilization of therapeutic courts. Reestablishing therapeutic courts for Olympia cases is an opportunity aligned with Goal 4 and will be a collaborative effort between City and District Court staff, including Prosecution and Public Defense. Increased staffing in the City Prosecutor's office to support establishment of therapeutic courts and traffic enforcement is an additional opportunity to address community needs and expectations. Additional information on this opportunity is available in the [May 12, 2026 Council Study Session](#).

In alignment with the Olympia Police Department's staffing study, the department has identified the hiring of additional Familiar Faces peers would increase the program's ability to serve some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

Next Steps

The next step will be to bring City staff together to discuss potential priority areas in continuing to move this work forward. This will include utilizing the feedback from the Social Justice and Equity Commission, refinement of data used to guide decision making, and assessment of available resources. Staff are also committed to a regular cadence of reporting back to Council and the community on this work.



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