



OLYMPIA DOWNTOWN STRATEGY

VOLUME 1: SUMMARY

Adopted April 25, 2017

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Workshop and Online Participants

Thank you to the nearly 3,500 community members who brought local expertise, enthusiasm, values, and teamwork to the community meetings and online surveys. Your time and effort are the basis of this Downtown Strategy.

Stakeholder Work Group

Tessa Andrascik
Janice Arnold
Clydia Cuykendall
Janae Huber
Meg Martin
Kim Murillo
Jessicarae Nunez
Ruben Nunez
Missy Watts
Karen M. Parkhurst
Connie Phegley
Dave Platt
Karen Reagan
Mike Reid
Carole Richmond
Annette Roth
Vita Zvirzdys-Farler
Terry Wilson
Bob Wubbena

Executive Steering Committee

Keith Stahley, *CPD Director*
Leonard Bauer, *CPD Deputy Director*
Renee Sunde, *Economic Development Director*
Rich Hoey, *Public Works Director*
Jay Burney, *Assistant City Manager*

Paul Simmons, *Parks, Arts & Recreation Director*

Kellie Braseth, *Communications Director*

Larry Dibble, *Fire Chief*

Ronnie Roberts, *Police Chief*

Darren Nienaber, *Deputy City Attorney*

City Council

Cheryl Selby, *Mayor*
Jessica Bateman
Jim Cooper
Clark Gilman
Julie Hankins
Nathaniel Jones
Jeannine Roe
Stephen Buxbaum (former)
Steve Langer (former)

Planning Commission

Mike Auderer
Travis Burns
Paula Ehlers
Darrell Hoppe
Negheen Kamkar
Brian Mark
Carole Richmond
Missy Watts
Kim Andresen (former)
Max Brown (former)
Judy Bardin (former)
Roger Horn (former)
Jerry Parker (former)

Advisory Boards

Arts Commission
Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee
Design Review Board
Heritage Commission

Parking & Business Improvement Area Board

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

Utility Advisory Committee

City Staff Technical Team

CPD Long-Range Planning

Amy Buckler

CPD Current Planning

Tim Smith, Cari Hornbein, Catherine McCoy

Downtown Liaison

Mark Rentfrow

CPD Historic Preservation

Michelle Sadlier

CPD Building

Todd Cunningham

CPD Parking

Karen Kenneson and Mark Lane

CPD Social/Housing Services

Anna Schlecht

PW Transportation Planning

Sophie Stimson

PW Transportation Engineering

Mark Russell

Police

Deputy Chief Aaron Jelcick

Parks/Arts

Stephanie Johnson and Jonathon Turlove

Intercity Transit

Dennis Bloom

Consultant Team

MAKERS architecture and urban design

MIG|SvR

The Athena Group

Steinbrueck Urban Strategies

Property Counselors

3 Square Blocks

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Downtown Olympia is South Puget Sound's regional hub for economic and social activity. With eclectic shopping and dining, numerous arts and entertainment venues and a rich historic fabric, Downtown has much to offer. In addition, recent public and private investments totaling over \$180 million have set the stage for a budding renaissance that is realizing numerous community goals.

However, Downtown faces some important issues—development uncertainties related to sea level rise and site contamination, a continuing need for inclusive residential opportunities, a strong interest in maintaining and growing a vibrant business and retail environment, and the increasingly critical need to address homelessness and street dependency. The Olympia Downtown Strategy (Strategy or DTS) is the City's effort to address these concerns with a clear set of actions to sustain and improve Downtown for its residents, workers, businesses, and visitors.

PURPOSE

The Downtown Strategy:

- Identifies community priorities for Downtown,
- Outlines realistic and effective actions for the next five years,
- Guides City budgets and work plans,
- Builds community partnerships,
- Helps us market Downtown, and
- Moves our vision for Downtown forward.

CITYWIDE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN/ACTION PLAN OUTCOMES FOR DOWNTOWN

Not only does the Downtown Strategy reflect community goals raised in this process, but it also works toward the Comprehensive Plan's vision for Downtown:

- 1 A vibrant, attractive urban destination
- 2 A safe and welcoming Downtown for all
- 3 A mix of urban housing options
- 4 A variety of businesses
- 5 Connections to our cultural and historic fabric
- 6 Engaging arts and entertainment experiences

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Downtown Strategy's guiding principles were developed by the City Council while scoping the project and further refined during community conversations at Workshop 1 and Online Survey 1. The following ideals and themes should guide Downtown's development and improvements:

- **Effective.** Focus on actions that meet multiple goals at once.
- **Realistic.** Ensure that actions are realistic in terms of resources and timing.
- **Unique qualities.** Preserve Olympia's unique qualities, such as its waterfront and eclectic character.
- **Waterfront and natural setting.** Highlight these assets and physically or visually connect to them.
- **Family friendly.** Make sure Downtown is safe, fun, and accessible to children and families.
- **Pedestrian and people-oriented public spaces.** Create and promote lively and active outdoor spaces.
- **Walkable lifestyle.** Encourage development that supports living, working, and recreating in close proximity with easy pedestrian connections.
- **Vibrant, diverse economic center.** Reduce development uncertainties, encourage private investment, strengthen local businesses, make Downtown inviting, encourage more residents, improve Downtown's identity and perception, promote tourism, and connect to other community and economic development efforts.
- **Environmentally conscious design.** Encourage building, site, and infrastructure design that reduces Olympia's carbon, energy, and water footprint.
- **Historic character.** Preserve and enhance Downtown's historic character.
- **Diversity of housing.** Ensure that people from all socio-economic backgrounds can live Downtown.
- **Safe and comfortable bicycle routes.** Improve bicycling connections for commuters, tourists, and occasional cyclists.

DOWNTOWN STRATEGY INTENT

The Strategy presented in this document integrates current activities with new actions to achieve the vision articulated in the Comprehensive Plan and the Downtown Strategy's public process. This Strategy is:

- **Holistic:** Actions are directed toward the full range of public objectives and City functions.
- **Integrated and results oriented:** What makes this a strategy rather than a plan is that it focuses on specific near-term actions that build on and complement one another.
- **Equitable:** Special care was taken to ensure that all people using Downtown will benefit and to avoid displacement of less advantaged people.
- **Forward thinking:** Participants in the planning process recognized that change will happen, but also developed measures to retain the valued characteristics that distinguish Downtown as a special place to live, work, play and shop.
- **Timely:** The recommended actions in this Strategy are intended to occur over the next six years to take advantage of the momentum generated, previous work, current market opportunities, and new development projects.

The Downtown Strategy is a living document that will be updated every five years or so.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS

Downtown Strategy actions will be included in the Comprehensive Plan Action Plan, which includes indicators to track and share our progress in accomplishing our Downtown vision.

In addition to the priorities and actions reflected herein, other Downtown issues and efforts will also influence Downtown and may be influenced by Downtown Strategy actions. These all have different timelines and decision tracks. Some are within the purview of the City of Olympia, while others are led by separate agencies. Our aim is to stay coordinated and connected to these efforts. An outline of efforts is included in [Appendix A.5](#).

This Strategy is not binding on future Comprehensive Plan and development regulation amendments; rather it provides general guidance on the drafting of future proposals. The City Council will consider such future actions based on public participation and records created at that time.

Since the Downtown Strategy is a 6-year *action strategy*, its primary focus is on implementation, to take advantage of previous work, and current market and development opportunities. *Volume 2: Elements* details the actions and their implementation steps which, taken together serve as a road map for City activities over the next 6 years. A summary of Actions begins on page 17.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Downtown Strategy has been developed at an opportune time to build on the substantial public investments the City has already made, take advantage of the emerging real estate market, and coordinate or initiate several critical actions to address challenges and opportunities. The City will make streetscape investments, strengthen and form partnerships, and update standards to ensure change can occur in line with community goals. A key feature of this Strategy is a “tool box” of development incentives to encourage private investment.



PROCESS

Close to 3,500 community members (from Olympia and other areas of the county) helped to shape the Downtown Strategy. The extensive public engagement process included:

- An average of 100 attendees at each of 5 public work sessions and open houses;
- A total of 3,936 responses to 4 web-based surveys;
- Two forums hosted jointly with the Economic Development Council, including participation from 30 members of the business and development community;
- Over 30 special topic meetings with interested parties (e.g., social services and affordable housing providers, business groups, neighborhood associations, architects, and arts and theater representatives);
- 10 Stakeholder Work Group (SWG) meetings;
- Multiple City Council and Land Use and Environment Committee briefings and discussions; and
- Numerous Staff Technical Team workshops.

This process ensured that the Downtown Strategy represents community views and fits within realistic City expectations.

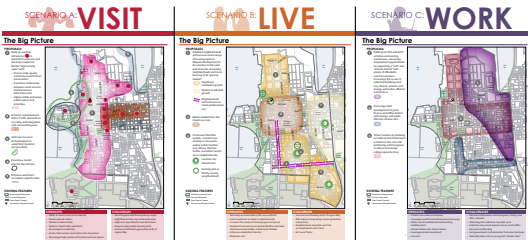
The Stakeholder Work Group (SWG)—a 20-person group representing varied interests (e.g., small business, social services, Port, neighborhoods, etc.)—provided invaluable input throughout the process on priorities, potential actions, and the best methods for engaging community members.



The team began the process by asking participants about their goals for Downtown, including where and what types of residential and other development they would like to see.



Sample Workshop 1 activities: small group character area proposals (left) and desired residential growth patterns and building character (right).



Workshop 2 participants evaluated proposals for ability to improve living, working, and visiting Downtown.



At Workshop 3, participants discussed specific strategies for meeting Downtown goals, like tools for housing affordability and landmark views preservation.



Workshop 4 participants demonstrated their priorities by "budgeting" with play money.

STEP 1: GATHER INFORMATION

Along with a review of background materials and existing conditions, the team engaged the SWG and community members to set the objectives for the Downtown Strategy. At the SWG meetings, Public Workshop 1, and Online Survey 1, the team collected community members' ideas and priorities for Downtown regarding the character of different areas, street improvements, residential growth, and existing views. The online survey, with 2,700 responses, gathered broad input on these topics. Its results, combined with Workshop 1, were the basis for Step 2. An online and workshop discussion on public safety also occurred during this Step.

STEP 2: EVALUATE ALTERNATIVES

The team developed and analyzed alternative scenarios for Downtown's land use and urban design through an iterative process including the City staff Technical Team and SWG meetings, Workshop 2, and Online Survey 2. Public feedback clarified preferences regarding the character areas, bicycle facilities, waterfront activities, street improvements, and public view protection. Step 2 efforts included a viewshed analysis, scoping a parking study, economic analysis, and preliminary streets design. Technical evaluation of the scenarios, along with public feedback, led to the draft Guiding Framework, a summary of preferred improvements.

STEP 3: DEVELOP STRATEGY

The team honed and prioritized urban design strategies, such as conceptual street designs, a scope for updates to building and site design guidelines, and public view protection; retail strategies; and housing goals and strategies through targeted meetings with experts and interest groups (e.g., Developers Forum and Urban Design Discussion events), the SWG, Public Workshop 3, and Online Survey 3. Workshop 3 included in-depth conversations about housing for people from a range of socio-economic backgrounds.

STEPS 4-5: DEVELOP IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS AND REPORT

Through continuous feedback with City staff, SWG meetings, Workshop 4, and Online Survey 4, the team filtered the final actions list and drafted and refined the Downtown Strategy. This phase focused on ensuring that proposed actions were realistic and effective within the 6-year timeframe.

SUMMARY

See the Step 1 through 3 Summary Reports for results from each activity. Through all of these efforts, the Downtown Strategy ties together many community conversations and reflects local values and goals.



CONCEPT

CONNECTING PEOPLE, PLACES, AND SPACES

“Connecting People, Places, and Spaces” embodies the Olympia Downtown Strategy’s core objectives. The four words carry specific directions that frame the Downtown Strategy’s (Strategy’s) organizing concept:

Connecting...

The Strategy connects Downtown elements and activities in two ways:

Physically, the Strategy highlights a number of street and pathway improvements that will help people access Downtown resources. Because safe and attractive pedestrian, transit, and bicycle circulation is critical to a vibrant downtown, the Strategy emphasizes these modes without disadvantaging vehicle movement. Additionally, the Strategy recommends improvements to the physical environment’s character, including streetscape and building design qualities and landmark views. These compose important visual connections.

Functionally, the Strategy coordinates a full range of City and community-based activities for greater efficiency and



Existing and new homes for people with a range of incomes and lifestyles is one focus of this Strategy.



People enjoying Downtown's retail environment.

effect. The Strategy's recommendations for the housing, retail, transportation, design, and homelessness/social services elements support one another to maximize their benefits. This functional integration, along with its action orientation, is what makes the Strategy a *strategy* and not just a *plan*.

People,...

Above all else, the Strategy is inclusive, recognizing that the Downtown is a place for all. The Strategy includes a set of coordinated actions to improve residential opportunities, support business activity, and provide a welcoming destination for visitors.

Within the next 20 years, Downtown Olympia is expected to be home to 5,000 new **residents**, so accommodating a growing residential population is an important objective. Participants in the planning process made it clear that Downtown should provide living opportunities affordable to people of all income levels. Therefore, the Strategy includes a set of ambitious actions to encourage development and preservation of dwelling units. While the City and its partners have been active in supporting new residential development, the Strategy planning process identifies the need for a more comprehensive housing strategy that details objectives and establishes a monitoring program and set of tools that can be adapted to changing conditions. Since the City does not construct housing directly, many of the actions call for working more closely with housing providers and increasing its "tool box" of development incentives. Additionally, the City is addressing homelessness and street dependency by initiating a homelessness response strategy.

Retail and other business interests are also addressed in the Strategy, which emphasizes a set of actions to 1) strengthen existing businesses, 2) improve retail area streetscapes, 3) increase the residential customer base, 4) improve Downtown's regional identity, 5) actively promote tourism, and 6) connect to other economic development efforts so that Downtown is supported by a strong local economy.

Visitors will find the Downtown an even more attractive place to visit with improved multi-modal access and new and better connected attractions. The street, wayfinding, and design measures in the Strategy will enhance Downtown's identity as South Puget Sound's civic, cultural, and commercial center.

Places,...

"Places" are physical structures and activity foci that make a downtown special. The Strategy encourages a wide range of uses and building types within a framework of "character areas" that reinforce a sense of place and enhance the individual buildings within each area.

Part of creating attractive, active spaces is to conserve, enhance, and connect the Downtown's enviable constellation of **existing physical resources** (many of which are highlighted on the Concept Map on page 11), including special districts such as the historic retail core, a publicly owned and accessible waterfront, landmark attractions such as the Farmers Market and Hands On Children's Museum, and numerous arts and entertainment venues. The Strategy includes preliminary work for establishing more effective design guidelines to enhance the individual districts' unique characters, encourage adaptive use of existing structures and reflect the core's historic resources. The recommended street improvements will also provide greater access to Downtown attractions and help to focus activities in areas such as the "Entertainment District."

New development will enlarge Downtown's spectrum of special places. To encourage high quality buildings that contribute to Downtown life and identity, the Strategy includes an extensive "tool box" of development incentives and the design guidelines noted above. Additionally, the City is initiating a Sea Level Rise Response plan that will identify needs for protecting Downtown along with actions that can be implemented incrementally and modified as new information emerges.

and Spaces.

Spaces sacred to Olympia include its beautiful and active waterfront parks, the Artesian Commons, Capitol Campus, and streets like Washington and Legion that are sometimes used for festivals. These public realm spaces are the face of Olympia, the setting for its public life, and what make Olympia truly unique and connected to its natural setting. The Strategy does not contain many actions related to parks because the City has recently adopted a Parks, Arts and Recreation Plan that addresses open space needs. However, the Strategy does include proposals that address other spaces important to Downtown's character and livability.

Many of the recommended street and design element proposals are directed at connecting **existing and surrounding open spaces** such as Sylvester Park, Capitol Campus, Percival Landing, Heritage Park, and East Bay. For example, a master plan for the Isthmus can play an important role in connecting the Capitol Lake waterfront with Percival Landing.

Views, particularly views of the water, mountains, and Capitol Dome provide a sense of place that unifies Downtown's visual identity. During the Strategy, the planning team analyzed signature viewsheds to identify potential impacts from future development. Fortunately, most of the critical views will not be affected by development. Additionally, some moderate actions are recommended to reduce impacts in some areas where views might be affected.



Olympia's attractive places include Percival Landing, the Hands on Childrens Museum, and the Washington Center for Performing Arts.



Sacred spaces and views keep Olympia unique.



Active, flexible streets for people is a Downtown Strategy goal.

Finally, recommended streetscape improvements will create more **active streets** that will serve as useful open spaces in themselves. For example, in the long-term, some streets with low traffic volumes, such as the east-west streets between Capitol Way and Percival Landing and Cherry Street between 4th and State Streets (highlighted in gray on the Concept Map) can be designed to accommodate a range of pedestrian activities and vehicular access. The Strategy also includes a schematic streetscape design that will allow more flexible use of the parking lane so that it can be easily converted from on-street parking to outdoor dining or sales and back again, depending on the adjacent property owner's needs. Designing parts of Legion Way and Washington Street to serve as festival streets will add a new multipurpose space for art walks, performances, festivals, and other special events.

More specific details about the actions that implement these strategic concepts are described on the following pages first by geography and then by topic.

GEOGRAPHIC SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Concept Map

The places, spaces, and connections described above form the basis of the “character areas” and “key physical improvements” depicted on the Concept Map on the following page. This map summarizes proposed building and street design improvements that help fulfill the major goals for Downtown—making each character area vibrant, livable, and unique for a range of people and improving key connections. Five streets slated for improvement within the next 6 years (short-term investments highlighted in blue) will quickly improve people's experience travelling between major assets in the Downtown core, especially for pedestrians and cyclists. Longer term street improvements (gray) would fill out many of the desired connections described above and enhance the unique characters of each area. Buildings, as they (re)develop over time, will also add to the character areas by following new design guidelines.

Character areas

Early public input showed that Downtown has unique areas with distinct assets, such as the waterfront, the historic retail core, a traditionally light industrial area in the northeast, and a residential neighborhood in the southeast. The following maps and descriptions show these “character areas” and the vision for their future. The Downtown Strategy's actions work together to enhance the existing character and better connect areas to make a holistic Downtown.

CONCEPT MAP

CHARACTER AREAS

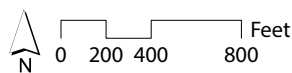
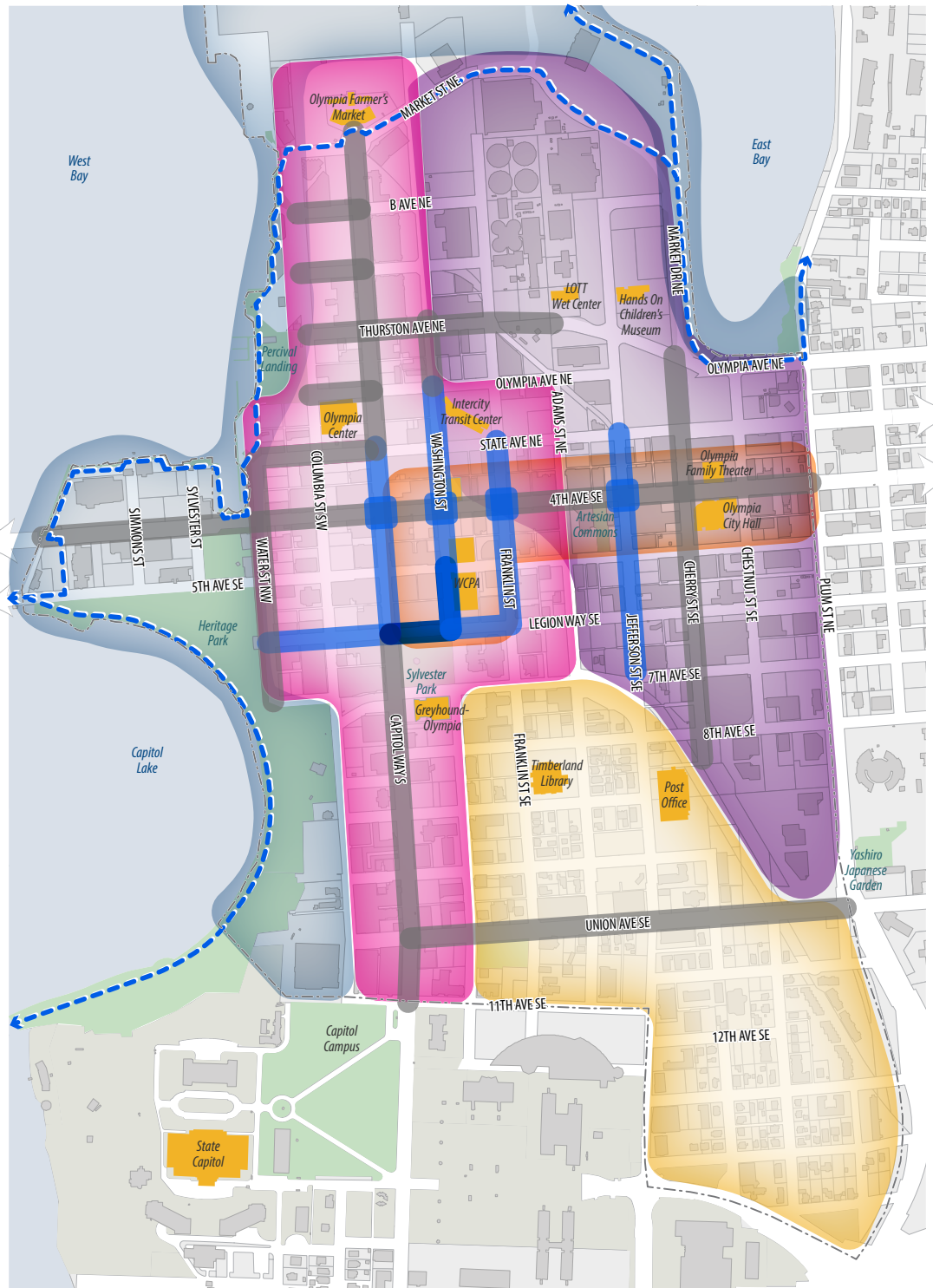
- WATERFRONT**
Enhance and connect to waterfront attractions.
- CAPITOL TO MARKET**
Encourage a high activity mix of uses from the Capitol to the Farmers Market.
- ARTISAN/TECH**
Encourage an eclectic mix of commercial activities and residences to support a creative neighborhood.
- ENTERTAINMENT**
Continue the core's energy eastward in a safe and lively entertainment district.
- SE NEIGHBORHOOD**
Build a holistic neighborhood with services and amenities.

KEY PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

- Short-term investments
- Long-term investment opportunities (looking for funding and partnerships)
- Olympia Waterfront Route trail planning and completion (immediate and long-term actions)

NOTE

Updated street standards and transportation master planning may lead to additional long-term street improvements.



CHARACTER AREAS

Waterfront

Improve upon existing attractions to create a vibrant, attractive, family-friendly destination, with emphasis on the surrounding natural environment and many landmark views. Maintain vibrant and visible gathering places for public activity and events; increase waterfront recreation opportunities; and create inviting pedestrian connections to the historic shopping district, marinas, Farmers Market, Hands on Children’s Museum, LOTT Wet Center, and Capitol Campus.

Design

Better connecting Downtown to its waterfront location—visually, physically, and symbolically—is a primary goal of this character area. Design elements found at Percival Landing—furnishings, light fixtures, marine hardware, wood pilings and boardwalks, rope, etc.—may be incorporated into streetscape improvements and new developments to help draw the aesthetics of the waterfront deeper into Downtown. Designs and materials might reflect additional waterfront themes of shoreline ecology, Northwest Native American history, historic industrial uses, sailing and boating, fishing and aquaculture, and commercial trading at the Port.

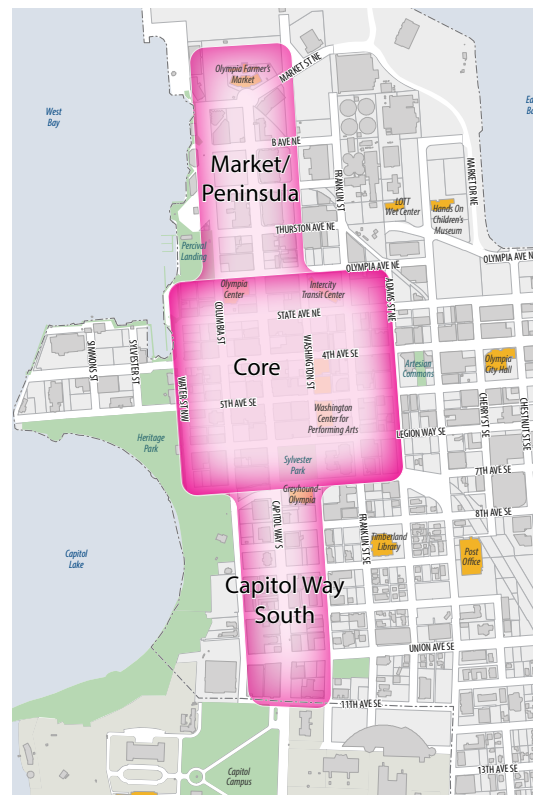


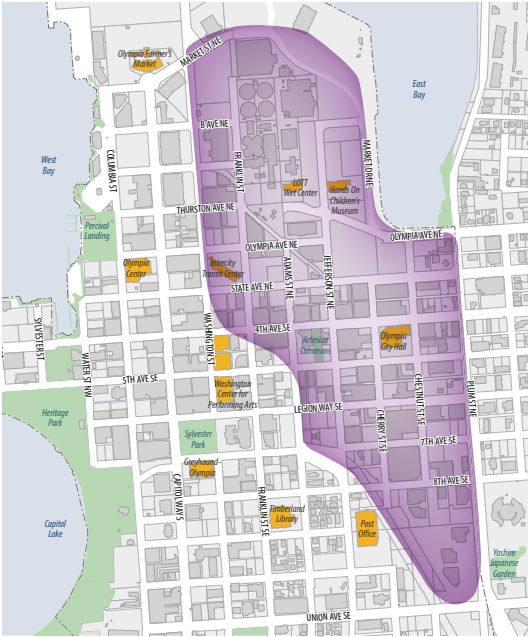
Capitol to Market

Improve upon existing attractions to create more pedestrian-oriented streetscapes with a blend of retail, entertainment, mixed-income residential, and hospitality that draws people between the Capitol Campus, Downtown historic core, and the Farmers Market. A vibrant retail environment provides an exciting shopping destination that helps small and diverse businesses thrive while also meeting day-to-day residential needs. A more active atmosphere, redevelopment of blighted or underused sites, good design, and continued clean and safe efforts by the City and other partners generate a feeling of safety in this area. Some strategies are specific to three distinct subareas: the Market/Peninsula, Core, and Capitol Way South.

Design

Early 20th century architecture of the historic retail core sets the design foundation for this character area. The historic styles and influences are varied, including Neoclassical, Art Moderne, Chicago Style, Romanesque, Victorian, Mission Revival, and Art Deco, but the underlying design goal is to activate streetscapes—such as with storefront building design, wide sidewalks, and multimodal access. Within the historic retail core, design elements should complement the surrounding historic architecture with sensitivity to neighboring buildings' proportions and rhythms; "classic main street" furnishings, finishes, and styling; and materials drawing inspiration from surrounding historic materials like sandstone, brick, terracotta, and granite.



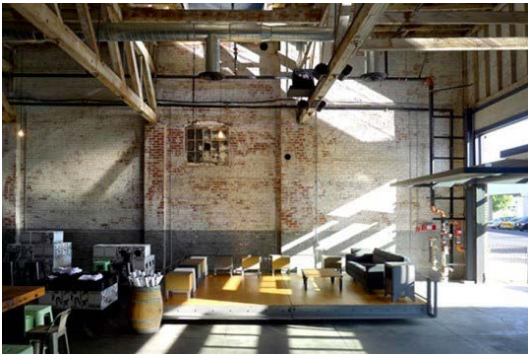


Artisan/Tech

Complement Port and LOTT facilities with redeveloped warehouses to create a mixed-use, artisan, culinary arts, and tech hub that includes affordable commercial space, housing (especially for artists and craftspeople), studio/workshop, gallery, and retail space. Encourage the reuse of industrial buildings and diverse, eclectic, energy- and water-efficient architecture. Ensure that visitors of all ages feel safe and comfortable to participate in exciting education and recreation opportunities. Spur mixed-income residential development to support car-free lifestyles near the Transit Center. A more active atmosphere, redevelopment of blighted or underused sites, good design and continued clean and safe efforts by the City and other partners generate a feeling of safety in this area.

Design

Utility is a design driver for the informal Artisan/Tech character area, suggesting opportunities for adaptive reuse of existing buildings, and low-cost street improvements that promote new pedestrian and bike uses. The incorporation of “warm-industrial” materials—weathered wood, metal, etc.—and design elements—garage doors or large entryways that engage the street, parklets, etc.—are examples of how architecture and streetscape designs might complement the area’s DIY character.

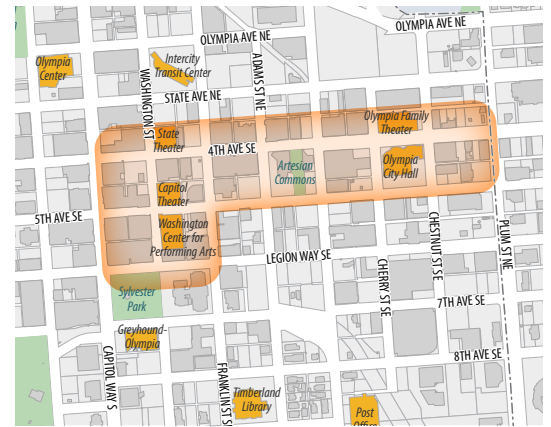


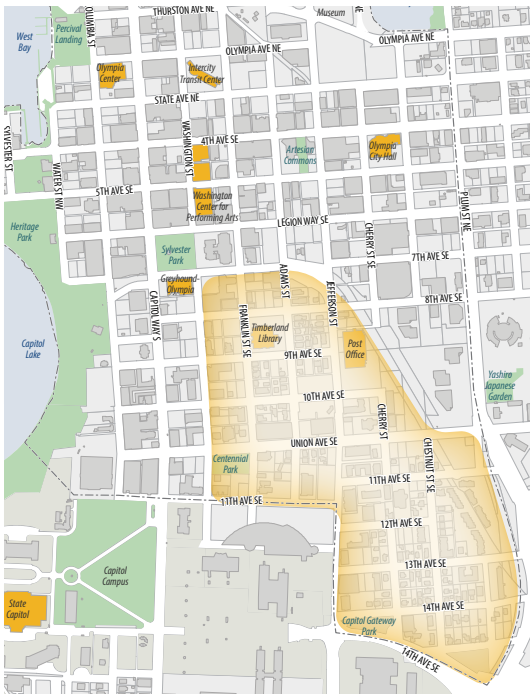
Entertainment

Enhance the area's quality as a regional theatre and entertainment district with excellent dining and night life that coexists with residential and commercial uses. Create bright, lively, and safe streets with retail, entertainment, and dining options along 4th and 5th Avenues to draw pedestrians from the historic core east toward Plum Street. A more active atmosphere, redevelopment of underused sites, good design, and continued clean and safe efforts by the City and its partners generate a feeling of safety in this area.

Design

Art and creative expression defines this hub of dining, nightlife, and the performing arts. Design elements here may reflect aspects of the Capitol to Market and the Artisan/Tech areas, but a focus on art, theatricality, imagination, and glittery night lighting will distinguish this area. Opportunities may include an art-themed corridor, permanent public art features, temporary art installations, performances, and creative detailing that perhaps features a hint of glitz. Buildings and streetscapes should support entertainment needs, such as wide sidewalks and spill-over pedestrian spaces, consistent and inviting lighting, and clear wayfinding.





Southeast Downtown Neighborhood

Build on existing assets—proximity to Downtown and State employment, the library, and historic residences—to establish a family-friendly residential neighborhood served by some offices, small-scale retail, cafes, and services. Encourage a range of housing (e.g., historic single-family homes, apartments, condos, and townhomes) and energy- and water-efficient buildings as well as other examples of “green innovations.” This area has gardens, children-oriented parks, and great pedestrian connectivity to the State Capitol Campus and other areas of Downtown.

Design

This area is characterized as an urban residential neighborhood with an organic mix of housing and building types. Significant landscape plantings (in streetscapes, medians, and on private property), traditional tree-lined streets, and green stormwater infrastructure help define a park-like neighborhood character and make use of the elevated topography. While architectural variety is important to the area, design guidelines can help ensure compatibility between old and new structures.



As a six-year strategy guiding the City’s investments and resources, the included actions implement many ideas raised during this process. Many of the actions are already underway. The Downtown Strategy includes these efforts as well as a number of proposals that arose during the planning process.

DOWNTOWN STRATEGY ACTIONS

A host of individual actions coalesce to form the Downtown Strategy. The individual Downtown Strategy actions are organized under the following categories (i.e., Elements): land use; development incentive tools; design; transportation; homelessness, street dependency, and social services; housing; and community and economic development. The following section provides an overview; full detail is found in *Volume 2: Elements*.

Though the actions are parsed out into categories, they interrelate and address multiple goals simultaneously. For example, encouraging development that fits in its character area through design guidelines and development incentives leads to a more beautiful and unique Downtown while also supporting a vibrant retail and residential environment.



ACTIONS

The Downtown Strategy recommends the City and its partners take the following actions to implement the concept described in the previous chapter. The actions are categorized under the following Elements: Land Use; Development Incentive Tools; Design; Transportation; Homelessness, Street Dependency, and Social Services; Housing; and Community and Economic Development (Retail). Partners, timeline, and further details are found in *Volume 2: Elements*.

The following pages summarize the actions the Downtown Strategy recommends. For full detail on each action and its background information, see *Volume 2: Elements*.



Land use and development code to be updated to better support mixed-use buildings with storefronts and amenities such as private open space.



City to work with partners to enhance waterfront recreation.



Development code and incentives (e.g., CDBG funds) encourage reuse of older buildings to preserve character while reinvigorating an area.



Example of a warehouse (before and after) adapted for re-use.

LAND USE

A thriving, mixed-use center

The following actions focus on the zoning and development regulations, and other City actions that encourage redeveloping properties to fulfill the vision and concept of connecting people, places, and spaces. These actions are closely related to the Design, Development Incentive Tools, Transportation, Housing, and Community and Economic Development (Retail) Elements.

- LU.1 Form a Sea Level Response (SLR) Plan** that identifies needs for protecting Downtown, risks, uncertainties, private and public costs, funding, and a response that can be implemented incrementally and modified as new information emerges.
- LU.2 Develop and adopt a land use, circulation, design, and environmental enhancement plan for the isthmus**, including determining the future of the City-owned land and identifying the possibilities for public/private partnerships and mixed-use development and/or park(s).
- LU.3 Update zoning and development standards**, including:
 - Align standards with character areas (e.g., establish an overlay for desired uses in the Art/Tech area and allow more neighborhood-serving commercial in the Southeast Neighborhood),
 - Simplify allowed use tables,
 - Include appropriate standards for storefronts, retail space compartmentalization, private open space, and impact mitigation in mixed use areas, and
 - Other small changes and housekeeping.
- LU.4 Develop actions to enhance and promote waterfront recreation activities with partners** including City Parks, Olympia Yacht Club, Port of Olympia, State of Washington, Hands on Children's Museum, and LOTT.
- LU.5 Identify buildings and tools appropriate for adaptive reuse, and promote these tools** to encourage older, character-defining buildings to be rehabilitated with housing, retail, office, and/or entertainment space.
- LU.6 Apply for an EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant** and

LAND USE ACTIONS MAP

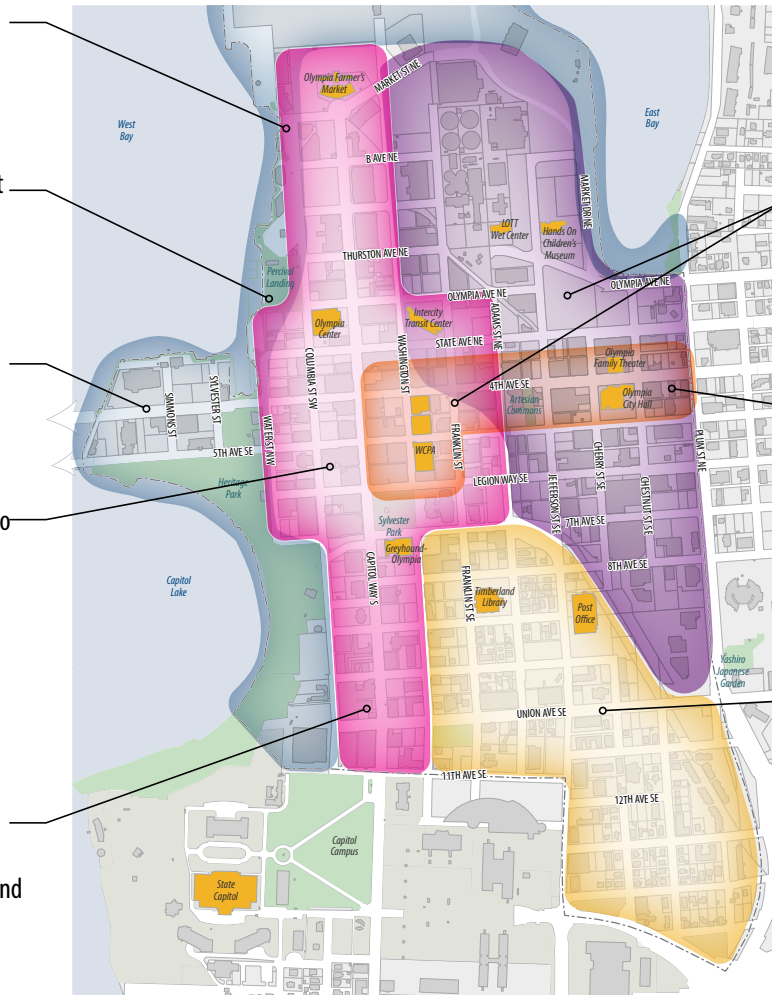
Form a Sea Level Response Plan (LU.1)

Enhance and promote waterfront recreation (LU.4)

Plan the isthmus (LU.2)

Update development standards to better support storefronts, retail space compartmentalization, private open space, and compatibility between a mix of uses (LU.3)

Update mixed-use development code to ensure compatibility between the historic retail core and Capitol Campus (LU.3)



Encourage adaptive reuse of older buildings, especially in the Art/Tech and historic retail core areas (LU.5)

Update development code to mitigate impacts and ensure compatibility between entertainment uses and residences (LU.3)

Allow more neighborhood-serving commercial uses and expand the Urban Residential (UR) boundary to stabilize residential property (LU.3)

other funds to assist with assessment or clean-up of soil and groundwater contamination, thereby reducing development and environmental uncertainties and risks.

LU.7 Explore how City-owned properties (e.g., parking lots, the old fire station, and library) could be redeveloped through public/private partnerships to meet City/community goals. Community supported ideas include a new YMCA/community pool, affordable housing, structured parking, and an improved library.



Pre-assessing soil and groundwater contamination in redevelopment areas sets the stage for future funding support.

See the Development Incentives Tool Box on [page X](#) for more information on how to encourage private investment for a variety of benefits.

DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVE TOOLS

Encourage private investment to further community goals



The development community suggested the City should better promote existing incentive tools so that investors are aware of these opportunities.

To implement the Downtown Strategy, the City needs a set of “development incentive tools” (tools) such as funding sources, financial mechanisms, regulatory measures, programs, and collaborative activities. *Volume 2: Elements* includes a “tool box” describing 48 tools to support a variety of goals. The Downtown Strategy recommends that the City and its partners prioritize or add the following tools.

- DI.1** Promote incentives and other tools that encourage private investment so that businesses and investors are more aware of these opportunities.
- DI.2** Establish Downtown as an urban infill exemption area for SEPA in order to reduce time, cost and risk associated with the permitting process. Address environmental impacts upfront in the development code instead.
- DI.3** Explore a program to offer façade improvement grants or loans to support small businesses and encourage rehabilitation or even more minor improvements to existing buildings.
- DI.4** Explore the utility of a Local Improvement District (LID) to fund projects that benefit contributing property owners and Downtown as a whole. An LID could be used for street improvements, flood protection, utility upgrades, etc.
- DI.5** Explore the benefits of applying for State Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB) funds to help fund infrastructure improvements associated with job creation.
- DI.6** Explore extending lower Downtown impact fees to additional uses in the Downtown to align existing incentives with the uses we want to promote in the character areas.
- DI.7** Explore deferral of utility hook-up fees until time of Certificate of Occupancy (rather than time of permit) which can help to reduce overall costs associated with construction loans.
- DI.8** Explore a program to offer grants or loans for structural assessment and fire sprinklers for older buildings in order to reduce rehabilitation costs and incentivize reuse of existing buildings and support businesses locating in Downtown.



Façade improvements like this one for the new 222 Market can greatly enhance the streetscape.

DESIGN

An attractive and high-quality environment

The “Design” actions are intended to improve people’s experience as they move through Downtown by enhancing the look and feel of the environment around them. They include the visual characteristics of private development and some public realm features such as wayfinding and art. See the Transportation section for street-specific improvements.

The chart below summarizes visual elements that contribute to Downtown’s unique character and actions to enhance, protect, and connect them. See the Transportation actions for more detail on the connections.

IDENTITY-GIVING VISUAL ELEMENT	ACTIONS TO ENHANCE OR CONNECT THE ELEMENT
A variety of expansive waterfront settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the “Olympia Waterfront Route” trail around the peninsula • Include guidelines that enhance character of the waterfront setting
Views of the Capitol dome, mountains, and water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most views will not be affected by new development • Additional view protection measures under consideration
Historic core and Sylvester Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic preservation measures and design guidelines to enhance the character of the core • Streetscape improvements to Legion, Washington, and other core streets
Civic attractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve streetscapes between attractions, especially the Hands On Children’s Museum, the Market, Transit Center and Percival Landing
Signature streets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve Capitol Way to strengthen the visual and functional connection between the Capitol Campus and the Market • Establish or enhance gateway signage at key locations, most likely at Plum and Union and Capitol Way and Union
Eclectic/context-sensitive buildings and signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt design guidelines appropriate to each character area • Update sign code to reflect character area goals (e.g., lively evening ambience in the Entertainment District)

Waterfront



Reinforce maritime and Percival Landing character.

Artisan/Tech



Encourage adaptive reuse, energy- and water-efficient architecture, and an eclectic, industrial character.

Entertainment



Emphasize pedestrian interest, small scale street facades, diversity, and art and creative architecture.

SE Neighborhood



Increase compatibility between new and older residences, avoid impacts of larger buildings, increase pedestrian activity, and enhance safety and security.

Capitol to Market



Reinforce historic character and link to Capitol Campus.

D.1 Update design guidelines to:

- Consolidate Downtown design guidelines in one section,
- Be flexible, focused, and not onerous,
- Reinforce unique character areas (see images to the left and “Character Areas” on page 12),
- Include new mixed use and improved historic guidelines,
- Promote active streetscapes,
- Protect important views based on 2016 analysis,
- Include illustrative sketches, photos, and diagrams,
- Address private open space, retail storefronts and parklets, and
- Address site planning and design, pedestrian access, amenities, open space, and building design.

D.2 Update sign code to address unique Downtown needs and character, with particular attention to enhancing the Entertainment Area and historic retail core. (This is part of the citywide sign code update.)

D.3 Inventory historic architecture in Downtown. The City was awarded a grant to identify historically significant buildings within a 75-block radius. This first step may lead to expansion of the historic district or register properties, along with opportunities to incentivize reuse of older buildings.

D.4 Examine potential expansion of historic district boundary and/or historic designation of additional structures to preserve key properties and make them eligible for tax credits.

D.5 Develop an art and wayfinding plan that adds more public art and wayfinding to the streetscape in a well-coordinated fashion. Some areas of focus include Downtown entry points, character area enhancement, parking options, Capitol Campus coordination, and City logo update to existing signs.

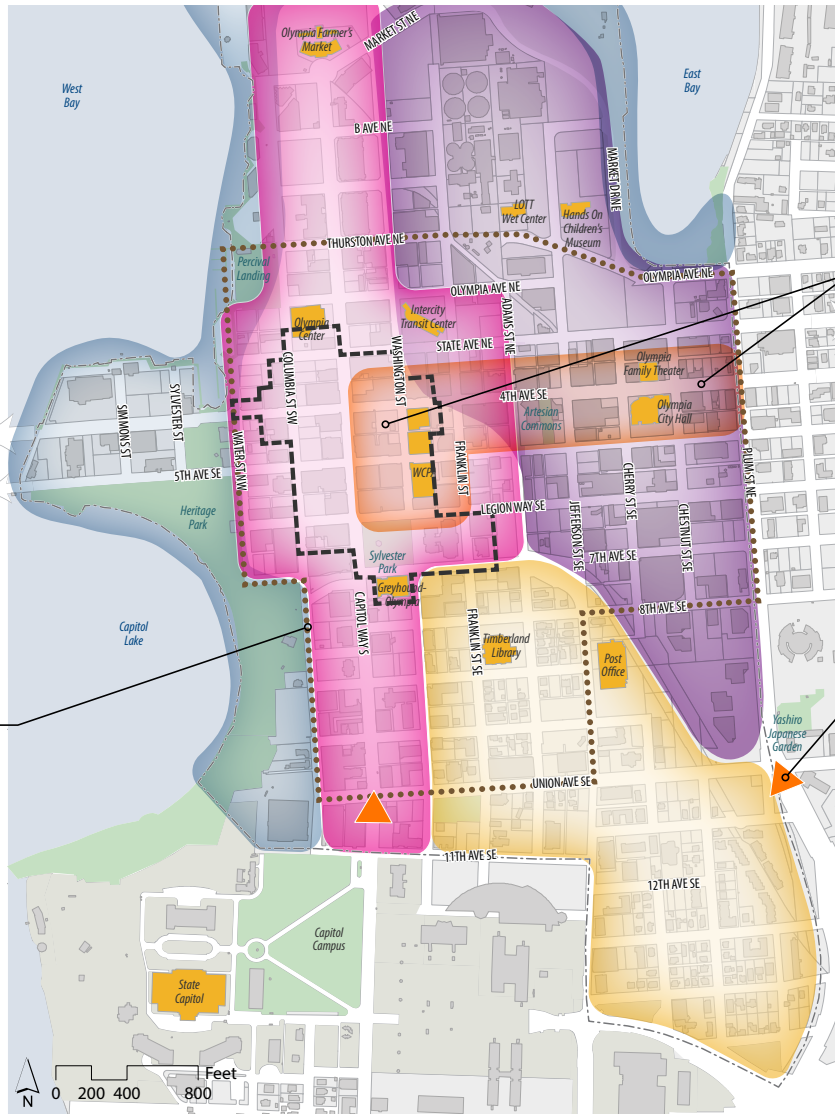
D.6 Upgrade or establish gateway features at key locations, including Plum Street and Union and Capitol Way and Union, to create a more defined entry into Downtown.

D.7 Implement view protection measures by memorializing important Downtown views in the Comprehensive Plan and taking moderate actions to protect views of concern.



DESIGN ACTIONS MAP

Update design guidelines to reinforce unique character areas (D.1):

-  Waterfront
-  Capitol to Market
-  Artisan/Tech
-  Entertainment
-  Southeast Neighborhood



Inventory historic architecture (D.3) and examine potential designation of additional structures or expanded historic district boundary (D.4)

-  Historic buildings inventory area
-  Existing Downtown Olympia Historic District

Pay particular attention to Entertainment Area and historic retail core needs in the sign code update (D.2)

Develop a Downtown-wide art and wayfinding plan (D.5), and focus on enhanced entries (▲) (D.6).



Our community has already taken steps to protect over 25 Downtown views through public ownership of the waterfront and regulations. The strategy recommends additional steps be taken to protect and enhance three additional views: 1) West Bay Park to Mt. Rainier, 2) East Bay Overlook to the Capitol Dome, and 3) Deschutes Parkway to Mt. Rainier.

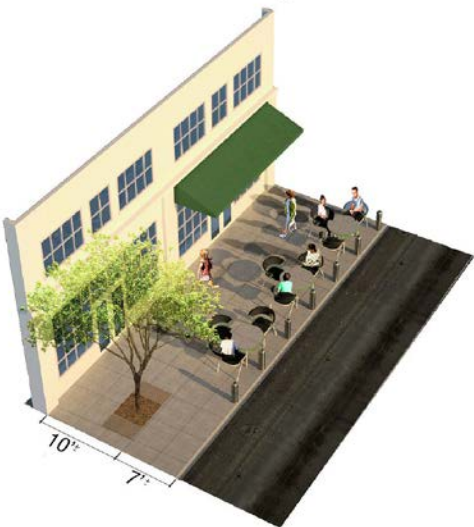
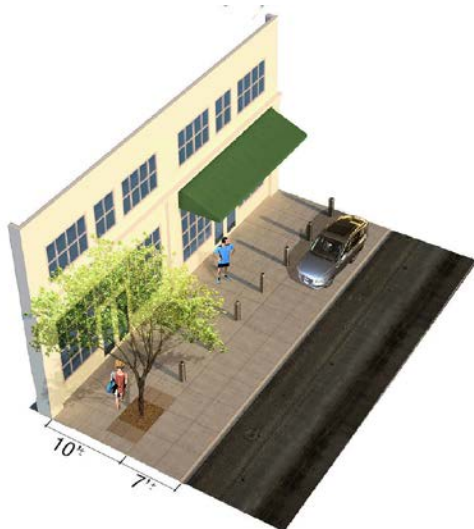
TRANSPORTATION

Multimodal, attractive streets

Five transformational street improvements projects—Legion, Capitol Way, Washington, Franklin, and Jefferson—will help make the pedestrian experience spectacular, while maintaining and improving bicycle and vehicular functionality. These, along with other long-term opportunities, will connect major Downtown destinations with a variety of designs appropriate to their character area context (see the Design Actions) while tying together a coherent Downtown identity.



Improvements to Legion Way for festivals and everyday pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicle use



The “flexible bollard” concept where the side of a street can be used for parking or additional sidewalk space will be explored as part of Action T.1.

T.1 Use upcoming street repaving projects as opportunities to improve multimodal circulation, intersections, pedestrian and bicycle safety and comfort, and streetscape character. This ambitious investment will help to distinguish the character areas and attract people and investment Downtown. See the map on the following page for more detail on concepts for each street. Phasing would be in the order as follows:

1. Franklin Street and Legion Way (includes detailed streetscape design standards that will inform Action T.3’s Engineering and Design Development Standards (EDDS) update),
2. Jefferson Avenue, and
3. Capitol Way and Washington Street (follows transportation analysis because of the complexity of the proposed designs; includes any additional streetscape design standards not covered in the earlier phases).

T.2 Explore traffic calming opportunities at intersections along 4th Ave E to make 4th Ave feel safer and more pedestrian friendly. Raised intersections, sidewalk extensions, art, and other amenities are possibilities. Implement as part of Action T.1’s projects.

T.3 Update the EDDS streetscape design guidelines, which guide investment in the right-of-way, to make Downtown streets distinctive; enhance the five unique character areas with lighting, paving, street furniture, and landscaping; and reflect the function of the street as determined in the Transportation Master Plan.

T.4 Explore new and diverse funding options for streetscape improvements and sidewalk repair and replacement. Identify resources for the short-term projects described above and long-term opportunities, such as the shared street and Cherry St improvements shown on the Transportation Improvements Map.

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS MAP

Shared streets

Seek funding to connect the waterfront to Capitol Way (and Downtown) with “shared streets” that slow vehicles, add character, and allow pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles to share the street (T.4)

Capitol Way

Better connect the historic retail core, Farmers Market, and Capitol Campus for pedestrians and transit (T.1)

Washington St

Accommodate a north-south bicycle route for all ages and abilities while maintaining vehicular and pedestrian access (T.1)

Legion Way

Create a “festival street” between Capitol Way and Washington St designed to accommodate public gatherings—street fairs, markets, etc.—and typical traffic on other days. Include pedestrian and bicycle improvements beyond the festival street segment (T.1)

Improve the Olympia Waterfront Route (multi-purpose trail) (T.9)

Thurston Ave

Seek funding to provide an adequate sidewalk between Franklin and Washington to complete a connection from Percival Landing to the Hands On Childrens Museum (T.4)

Franklin St

As a transit-priority corridor, design and construct Franklin Ave to elegantly accommodate transit, people, and cars with improvements such as curb bulbs (better crossings and additional seating and landscaping) and in-lane bus stops (T.1)

4th Ave intersections

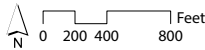
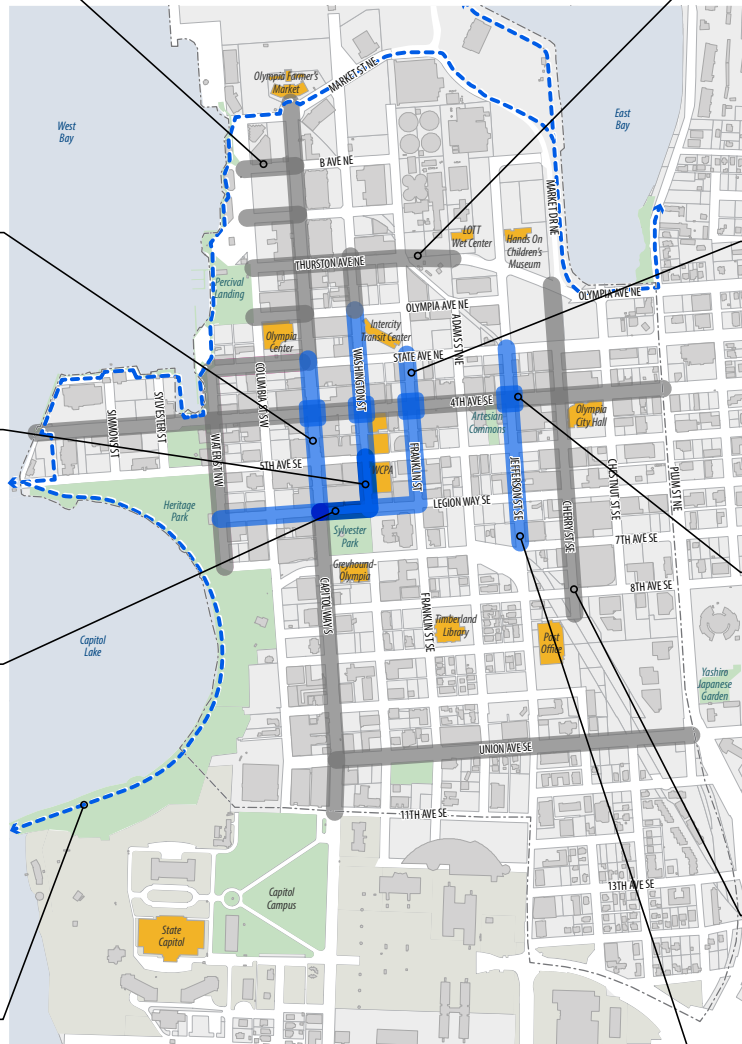
When improving Capitol Way, Washington, Franklin, and Jefferson, design and construct the intersections with 4th Ave to slow traffic and enhance the entertainment district character with public art, furnishings, and other streetscape amenities (T.2)

Cherry St

As funding becomes available, develop a secondary north-south bike route through Downtown. This may include low-cost street surface markings to signify that a lane is shared with bicyclists (i.e., sharrows) (T.4)

Jefferson St

Enhance the Art/Tech character, install street trees, and add pedestrian-friendly amenities such as curb bulbs with landscaping, seating, and lighting (T.1)

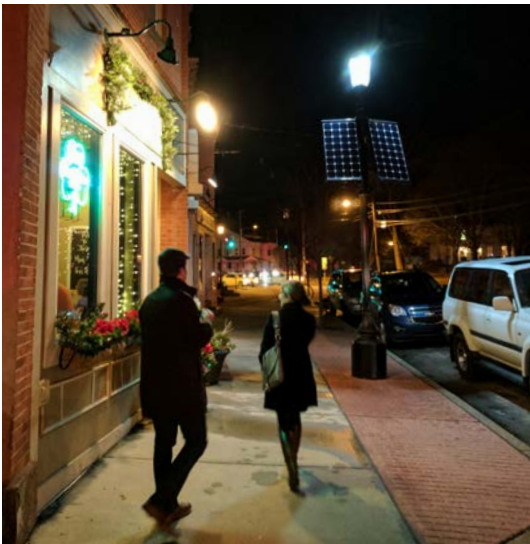


KEY PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

- Short-term investments
- Long-term investment opportunities (looking for funding and partnerships)
- Olympia Waterfront Route trail planning and completion (immediate and long-term actions)



The City will look for funding and partnership opportunities to make improvements to Thurston Ave and queuing at social services center.



Well-designed evening lighting is important for creating people-friendly, safe streets and alleys.

- T.5 Develop a Transportation Master Plan.** This citywide effort will focus on creating a complete multimodal transportation system (bikes, pedestrians, transit, cars, freight) and include a closer look at Downtown. Long-term bike connections to be studied include Legion, Washington, Thurston, and Cherry.
- T.6 Update the Downtown Parking Strategy** with a path forward for more convenient, available parking to support local business and residential needs. Include an evaluation of potential changes in travel modes, new technologies (e.g., self-driving cars), management tools, potential for structured parking, and signs.
- T.7 Prepare and adopt a Street Tree Master Plan** that will set the stage for the “right tree in the right place” approach to street plantings and inform future projects.
- T.8 Complete a comprehensive evening lighting audit** to determine areas where more street and pedestrian lighting is needed to provide a safe and welcoming pedestrian environment.
- T.9 Improve the Olympia Waterfront Route** by convening the partners to coordinate the next steps for completing and marketing this pedestrian/multi-purpose trail along the Olympia Waterfront. This effort should explore opportunities to add bicycle uses, and to expand the trail network south to the Capitol Campus and northeast to Thurston Ave.

HOMELESSNESS/STREET DEPENDENCY

Well-coordinated partnerships

Downtown Strategy participants voiced homelessness and street dependency as a priority concern. Not only is this human need a striking social issue, the level of homelessness Downtown challenges Olympia's sense of itself as a caring community and Downtown's potential as a welcoming and useful place for all. Though the issue is citywide, regional, national, and societal, some actions can be taken at the local level for Downtown. The actions below focus on partnerships and regional efforts while ensuring that Downtown impacts are addressed.

HS.1 Convene a broad range of community stakeholders to form an action plan leading to a more coordinated response to homelessness/street dependency and the impacts to Downtown.

HS.2 Initiate a discussion with regional policymakers about future social service siting, funding, and support needs to ensure access to full spectrum services in the region.



As an accessible place, Downtown plays an important role for providing social services to people in the region who experience homelessness.

“Street dependence” means that a person is dependent on streets or other public facilities for their immediate needs because they have no other option. It refers to a group of people who may be one or more of the following:

- Homeless;
- Marginally housed (facility or private home that requires vacation during daytime hours);
- Housed in hostile living arrangement (e.g., LGBTQ youth with hostile family members);
- Adequately housed but oriented toward a “street community” for social contacts, emotional support, and entertainment (i.e., music, sports, etc.);
- Adequately housed but oriented toward a “street community” for access to income and for substance dependencies.

Street dependency and homelessness not only deprive the individual of a stable home base from which to build a productive and independent life, they also place stress on the public realm which is not designed to accommodate someone's personal and individual needs.

“THE PROBLEM IS NOT SOLELY OLYMPIA'S; AND OLYMPIA ALONE CANNOT TACKLE HOMELESSNESS, WHICH IS ENDEMIC. THERE IS A STRONG NEED FOR A COORDINATED, REGIONAL 'WE ARE IN THIS TOGETHER' STRATEGY.”

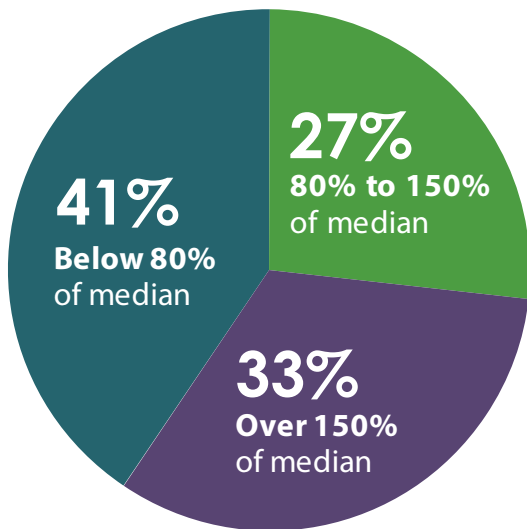
- PETER STEINBRUECK

Downtown is expected to accommodate 5,000 new residents living in approximately 2,500 to 3,500 new residences over the next 20 years. Downtown Strategy participants continuously expressed the importance of addressing housing needs for people with a variety of incomes and providing strong, resilient neighborhoods in the urban core.

HOUSING

Livable, mixed income neighborhoods

Community members young and old, newcomer and long-time resident, appreciate a variety of housing choices in a place where they can minimize auto-dependency, live close to work and play, and enjoy Downtown amenities. At the same time, the Downtown's vibrancy depends on local residents to support its businesses, provide a local work force, and generate 18-hour a day pedestrian activity. Though the City does not directly construct or manage housing resources, the following actions address ways the City can encourage housing and neighborhood development through zoning, regulations, incentives, public investments, and partnerships with housing providers. These actions are closely related to the Homelessness/Street Dependency efforts and other actions throughout this Strategy that improve the livability of Downtown through safe and comfortable street design, vibrant retail, and desirable real estate/building development.

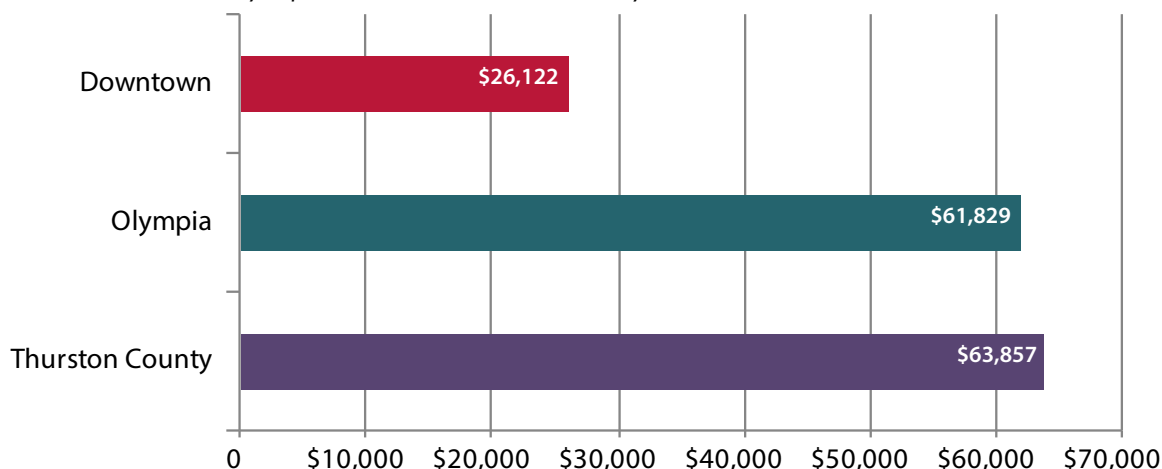


Distribution of income levels in Olympia

- H.1** **Develop a Comprehensive Housing Strategy** to identify affordability needs and goals, establish a monitoring program, and implement best practice tools to establish a mixed income residential community in Downtown.
- H.2** **Dedicate additional resources for an ongoing housing program to implement the Housing Strategy described in H-1.** This program would promote the City's housing goals, support and coordinate with affordable housing production and regional partners, identify funding opportunities, and assess and monitor the housing inventory in relationship to City goals.
- H.3** **Facilitate construction of new housing** by using, promoting, and exploring additional incentives/tools to encourage housing options for a range of incomes and lifestyles (e.g., various size apartments/studios, townhomes, live/work, collective living, etc.).

MEDIAN INCOMES

for Downtown, Olympia, and Thurston County



On average, people living Downtown make less than half the income of Olympians as a whole. (Source: American Community Survey 2010-2014)

H.4 Prevent displacement of unsubsidized but affordable units by inventorying current affordable units, studying their displacement risk, and identifying actions to encourage property owners, housing agencies, and nonprofit housing providers to retain their current inventory.

H.5 Actively work with partners to encourage affordable spaces for artists and other types of workforce housing. These may include live-work units, artists' housing, loft apartments, shared living, micro-units, and affordable studio, rehearsal, and gallery space.

H.6 Foster Downtown neighborhood organization(s) to build social capital and a sense of community through self-help activities (e.g., block watch, tree planting, tool-sharing program, etc.), funding (e.g., neighborhood grant program, public gardens), and public services, and explore further options.

H.7 Explore Downtown park needs, particularly in the Southeast Neighborhood, to meet the needs of the growing Downtown population.

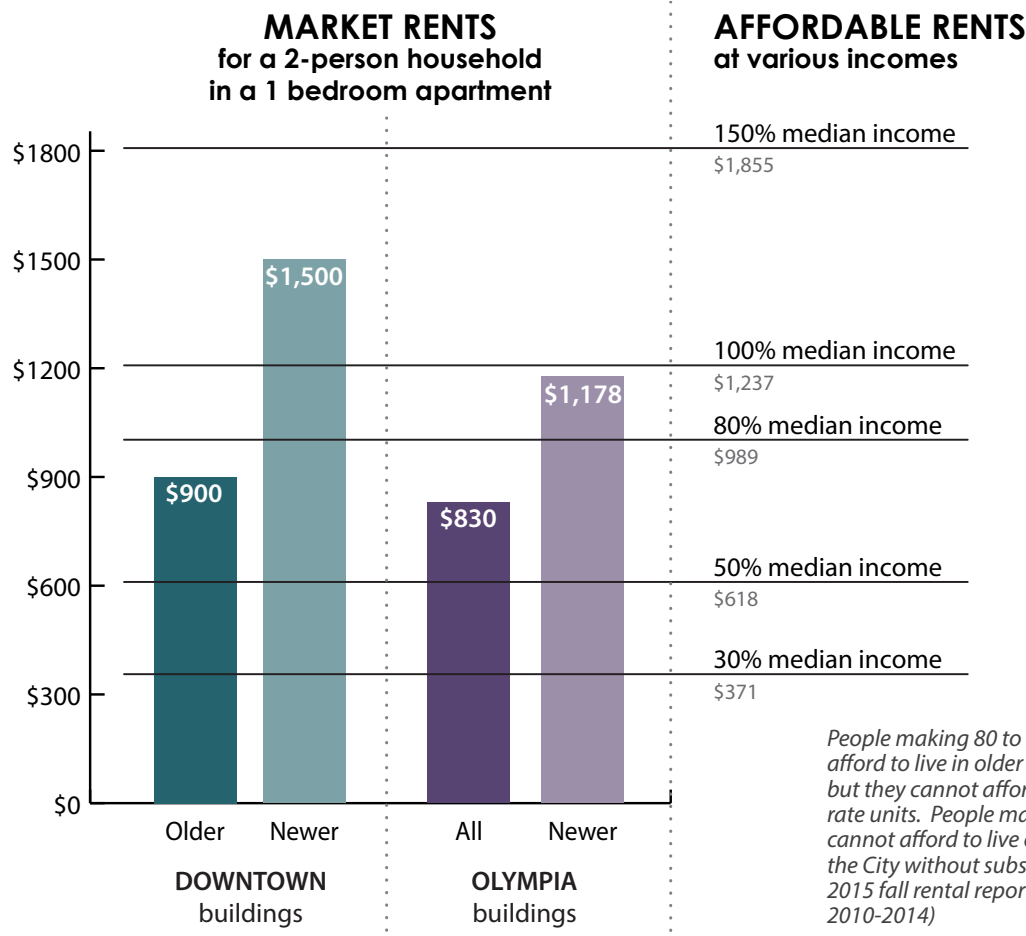
H.8 Include housing as part of the Community Renewal Area (CRA) public/private partnerships for Water Street and the former Griswold site.



Both subsidized and market-rate affordable housing is important for providing a range of housing options.



The City has selected development teams to explore options for housing with commercial uses at the Water Street (left) and former Griswolds sites (right) (outlined in red) (Action H.8).



People making 80 to 100% of median income can afford to live in older market rate Downtown buildings, but they cannot afford to live in most newer market rate units. People making 50% of median income cannot afford to live either Downtown or in the rest of the City without subsidies. (Source: Dupre and Scott, 2015 fall rental report; American Community Survey 2010-2014)

DOWNTOWN OLYMPIA BUSINESSES BY THE NUMBERS

Nearly **1,000** businesses operate in
Downtown

75% of Downtown businesses have
less than 10 employees

10,000 employees work Downtown

56 new businesses have opened
since 2015 (**31** have closed
or moved)

18% of Downtown's housing stock
was built between 2012-2016

RETAIL, BUSINESS, COMMUNITY, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A vibrant, dynamic business environment that attracts people, activity, and investment

As a capital 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 and 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 and Economic Development efforts** so that Downtown is supported by a strong local economy, and
6. **Actively promote tourism** so that Downtown is a well-known and sought-out destination.



Clean, safe, and lively streets support a vibrant retail environment and vice versa.



Programming and focused efforts at the Artesian Commons help the space feel welcoming to all users.

Many of these priorities are advanced by actions in other strategy elements, including addressing homelessness and street dependency (HS.1), the parking strategy and street improvements (T.1-9), distinguishing character areas through design guidelines (D.1), encouraging a mix of housing (H.1-8) and tools to support business investment (DI.8). Additional actions to support the Downtown business environment are organized in sub-categories:

R.1 Provide a clean and safe Downtown environment:

- A. Aim to accommodate a full-time walking patrol** to contribute to the sense of safety and deter crime.
- B. Coordinate the development of a nightlife/safety plan** for the Entertainment Area to alleviate nighttime safety and parking concerns.
- C. Continue existing Clean and Safe programs** with the PBIA and ODA, such as the Downtown Ambassadors, the Clean Team, and flower baskets.
- D. Locate public restrooms Downtown** to improve public spaces.
- E. Bring positive, daily activities and events to the Artesian Commons** through programming and partnerships (e.g., Park Rangers) to create a space that is safe and welcoming for all.
- F. Assess the outcome of the shared trash compactor pilot program**, and continue the program if it is successful to reduce the number of garbage cans in the alleys and frequency of garbage truck trips.

R.2 Strengthen the business community:

- A. Develop and maintain a business support webpage** to make it easier for businesses to find information about licensing, allowed uses, and permit information.
- B. Conduct a business retention survey with local retail business owners** to understand how the City and partners can promote business success.
- C. Improve front counter permit assistance for small business owners opening a storefront** by developing building code and permit informational materials.
- D. Sponsor training and share information on resources to support local retailers.** For example, invite guest speakers to Downtown business groups and offer workshops on best practices.

Many Downtown Strategy participants expressed concern over potential displacement of affordable commercial space as Downtown redevelops and changes over time. Action R.3 specifically addresses common small and start-up business needs for affordable space, and Action R.2.K and many others would help small businesses be successful.



The Grow Olympia Fund helped Olympia Coffee Roasters expand their startup.



The City can help connect people to affordable spaces like OlyMEGA Makerspace, a shared workshop.



Many of the actions strengthen and expand Downtown's assets, which already draw tourists and regional residents.

- E. Promote and provide assistance with development tools**, such as adaptive reuse of existing structures, financial incentives for historic buildings, and loans for redevelopment projects.
- F. Develop a media plan** to improve the perception of Downtown with data-backed stories on Downtown improvements, use, and relative lack of crime.
- G. Encourage State workers to come Downtown** through partnerships with the State and efforts such as advertising through messages, flyers, posters, displays, presentations, and promotions.
- H. Maintain the City's Economic Development Program**, which includes the Economic Development Director and Downtown Liaison.
- I. Support the PBIA's 5-year Strategic Plan.**
- J. Consider expanding the Parking and Business Improvement Area (PBIA) boundary** to potentially increase the area of businesses funding and receiving improvements.
- K. Fund the Grow Olympia Fund** (helps existing businesses grow) **and contribute funds to the regional Tune-Up Program** (helps stabilize existing businesses).

R.3 Help ensure adequate space for a spectrum of businesses by connecting businesses to available, appropriate, and affordable space (e.g., shared space and condo options).

R.4 Promote tourism:

- A. Leverage Thurston County's designation as an Innovation Partnership Zone** for brewing and distilling to advance the Art/Tech and Entertainment areas.
- B. Explore options for improving I-5 signs** for the historic district, waterfront, and other amenities to draw visitors Downtown.
- C. Support branding/marketing efforts** with the Visitors and Convention Bureau, Olympia Downtown Association, Parking and Business Improvement Area, and others; consider new events; and promote a cohesive event cycle.
- D. Support existing Downtown assets and additional attractions**, including a college presence and a full-service hotel.
- E. Identify steps to develop and promote arts, culture, and heritage activities**, particularly for the Art/Tech and Entertainment areas.
- F. Continue to support events** with logistical help and by implementing the Music Out Loud Program.



olympiawa.gov/DTS