

# **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR OLYMPIA AND THE OLYMPIA GROWTH AREA**

**Adopted by Olympia City Council: July 12, 1994**

**Adopted by Thurston County Board of Commissioners: July 25, 1994**

**Bob Jacobs**

Mayor

**Richard C. Cushing**

City Manager

Prepared by: Olympia Community Planning and Development Department  
Advance Planning and Historic Preservation

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# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR OLYMPIA AND THE URBAN GROWTH AREA

## Adopting Resolutions

Resolution No. 1383, effective July 12, 1994 (Olympia City Council)  
Resolution No. 10683, effective July 25, 1994 (Board of County Commissioners)

## Amendments

Resolution No. M-1394, effective December 6, 1994 (Olympia City Council)  
Resolution No. 10791, effective December 12, 1994 (Board of County Commissioners)  
Resolution No. 5569, effective December 19, 1995 (Olympia City Council)  
Resolution No. 11069, effective December 11, 1995 (Board of County Commissioners)  
Ordinance No. 5661, effective December 26, 1996 (Olympia City Council)  
Resolution No. 11322, effective December 23, 1996 (Board of County Commissioners)  
Ordinance No. 5757, effective December 16, 1997 (Olympia City Council)  
Resolution No. 11589, effective December 15, 1997 (Board of County Commissioners)  
Ordinance No. 5861, effective December 15, 1998 (Olympia City Council)  
Resolution No. 11866, effective December 21, 1998 (Board of County Commissioners)  
Ordinance No. 5971, effective December 14, 1999 (Olympia City Council)  
Resolution No. 12108, effective December 20, 1999 (Board of County Commissioners)  
Ordinance No. 6073, effective December 12, 2000 (Olympia City Council)  
Ordinance No. 6140, effective August 28, 2001 (Olympia City Council)  
Ordinance No. 6195, effective July 3, 2002 (Olympia City Council)  
Ordinance No. 6276, effective September 23, 2003 (Olympia City Council)  
Resolution No. 13039, effective November 12, 2003 (Board of County Commissioners)  
Ordinance No. 6323, effective November 15, 2004 (Olympia City Council)  
Ordinance No. 6389, effective January 24, 2006 (Olympia City Council)

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# FOREWORD

This is the first Olympia Comprehensive Plan produced under the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA). It reflects the realities faced by Washington's fast-growing counties and cities in attempting to find the balance between planning responsibly for our future population while preserving the qualities our residents so appreciate.

Developing the Plan has not been an easy task. Despite the fact that Olympia and Thurston County have for years led the way in establishing an urban growth boundary, protecting environmentally-critical areas, and planning water, stormwater, sewer and transportation policies with our neighboring jurisdictions, the natural conflict between present preferences and future needs presented a major challenge.

The Olympia City Council wishes to pay tribute to the volunteer members of the Olympia Planning Commission, the professional staff of the Olympia Planning Department, and most of all to the hundreds of residents who phoned, wrote, and attended many meetings as they shaped the Plan.

Good planning and public process are expensive. This planning effort cost Olympia tax payers about a half-million dollars. Most of that was spent to support thousands of hours of public involvement. Costs included staff time, printing and mailing, preparing for and conducting public workshops and forums, and meeting with neighborhoods and other groups. Responding to public calls for additional meetings and time to read and comment on drafts, the Council compressed its own review schedule to allow the public as much time with the issues as State-imposed deadlines seemed to allow. After a thorough Planning Commission review, the Council applied its own best judgement with some carefully-considered amendments.

In considering and amending the Plan, this Council was building on the actions of past Olympia Councilmembers and County Commissioners, and by the realities of the "built environment" in the City limits and in Olympia's designated growth area. Past councilmembers had agreed, in a collaborative process with the other cities and towns in Thurston County, to Olympia's share (30,000) of the 100,000 new residents the State had directed our County to plan for over the next 20 years. In tasking Olympia's Planning Commission to produce this Plan, the City Council had specified the "Medium Growth, Full Density" option, the Connected Streets development pattern, and excellence in Urban Design as the parameters that would preserve the most future choices in land use, avoid inefficient sprawl-type development and traffic gridlock, and produce a community that would still be a pleasure to live, work, and recreate in, despite a significant increase in population. By specifying that, to the extent possible, growth would pay for growth, Councilmembers had done their best to ensure that sewer, water, stormwater and transportation systems, parks and recreation facilities, fire protection, and schools would be adequate to serve future residents, commuters and visitors.

Those choices all have their attractions and their costs, their proponents and opponents. This Council reaffirms them as the best possible choices despite the real challenges and change they represent. It would have been very easy (and probably a lot less controversial) for this and past Councils to allow the community to continue along its old course, leaving future citizens and community leaders in a much more difficult position just two decades from now. With our policy of long-term sustainability in mind, we think this Comprehensive Plan represents the most responsible path to take.

The GMA allows amendments on an annual basis, except in emergencies. Why might we need amendments? Population growth predictions have been accurate so far, but future growth might lag behind or shoot ahead of projections. Transportation policies might or might not prove adequate; funding for GMA-required capital facilities might not keep up with growth. And Olympia must start to grapple with the next big question: What happens in 30, 40, or 50 years when the Urban Growth Management Area is “built out” and people still want to move here?

This Olympia Comprehensive Plan has been the “Challenge of the Decade.”

We hope future local government leaders have the benefit, as we did, of dedicated and talented citizens, planning commission members, and staff who care deeply about Olympia’s future as they tackle their 21st Century planning challenge.

FOR THE OLYMPIA CITY COUNCIL

Bob Jacobs  
Mayor