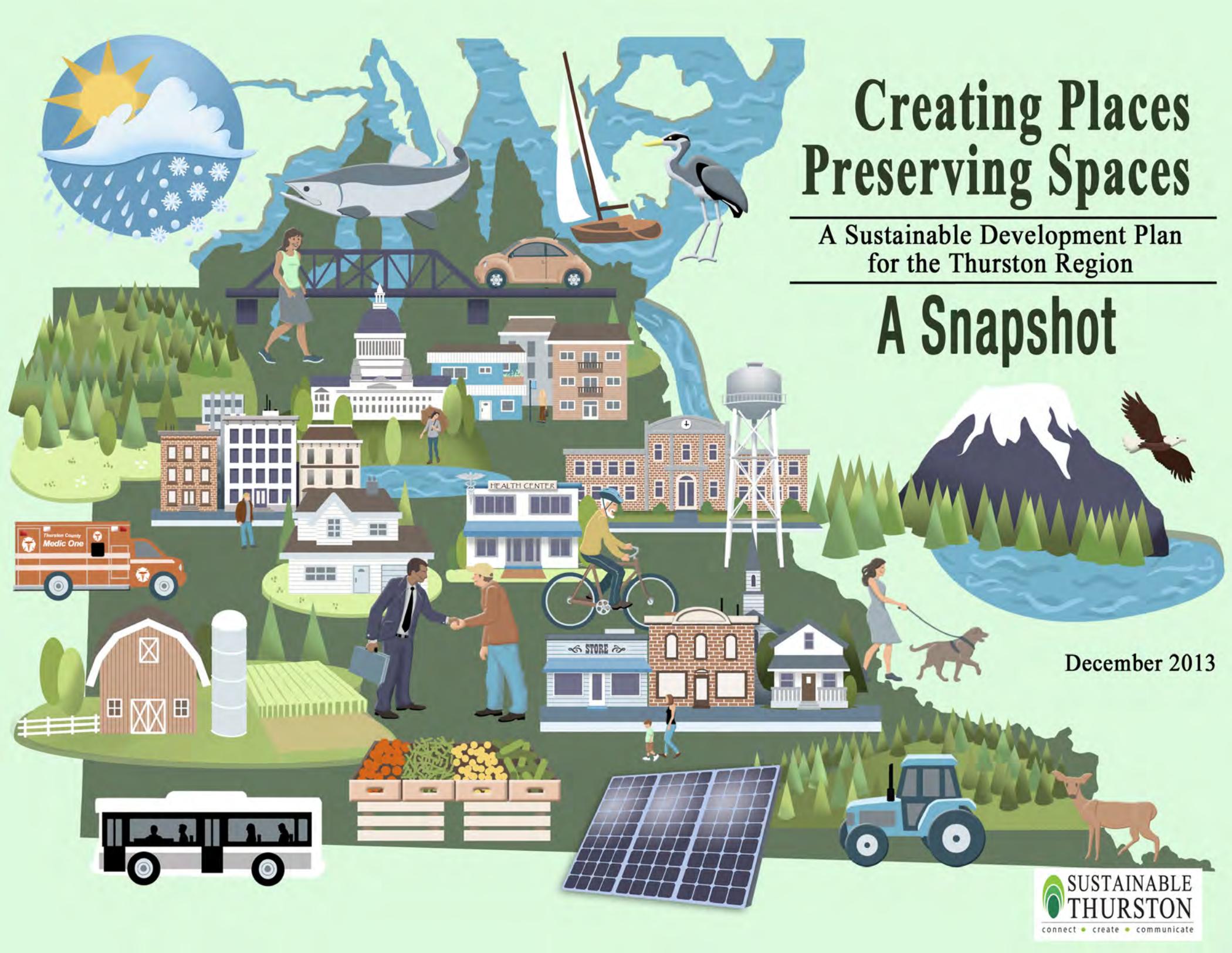


Creating Places Preserving Spaces

A Sustainable Development Plan
for the Thurston Region

A Snapshot

December 2013





A sustainable community will enhance quality of life, foster economic vitality, and protect the environment while balancing our needs today with those of future residents.

— Definition of Sustainability for the Thurston Region

THURSTON REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

(TRPC) is a 22-member intergovernmental board made up of local governmental jurisdictions within Thurston County, plus the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation and the Nisqually Indian Tribe. The Council was established in 1967 under RCW 36.70.060, which authorized creation of regional planning councils.

TRPC's mission is to **"Provide Visionary Leadership on Regional Plans, Policies, and Issues."**

To Support this Mission:

- A) Support **regional transportation** planning consistent with state and federal funding requirements.
- B) Address **growth management, environmental quality, economic opportunity**, and other topics determined by the Council.
- C) **Assemble** and **analyze** data that support local and regional decision making
- D) Act as a **"convener"** to build regional consensus on issues through information and citizen involvement.
- E) Build **intergovernmental consensus** on regional plans, policies, and issues, and advocate local implementation.

This report was prepared as part of the Thurston Regional Planning Council's 2013 regional work program.

Thurston Regional Planning Council

| Governmental Jurisdiction | Name of 2013 Representative |
|---|--|
| City of Lacey | Virgil Clarkson, Mayor |
| City of Olympia | Nathaniel Jones, Councilmember |
| City of Rainier | Dennis McVey, Councilmember |
| City of Tenino | Bret Brodersen, Councilmember |
| City of Tumwater | Tom Oliva, Councilmember |
| City of Yelm | Robert Isom, Councilmember |
| Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation | Amy Loudermilk, staff |
| Nisqually Indian Tribe | Willie Frank, Tribal Councilmember James Slape, Jr., Tribal Councilmember |
| Town of Bucoda | Alan Vanell, Councilmember |
| Thurston County | Sandra Romero, County Commissioner |
| North Thurston Public Schools | Chuck Namit, School Board Member |
| Olympia School District | Allen Miller, School Board Member |
| Intercity Transit | Karen Valenzuela, Authority Member |
| LOTT Clean Water Alliance | Cynthia Pratt, Board Member |
| Port of Olympia | George Barner, Port Commissioner |
| PUD No. 1 of Thurston County | Chris Stearns, PUD Commissioner |
| Associate Members | |
| Economic Development Council of Thurston County | Michael Cade, Executive Director |
| Lacey Fire District #3 | Gene Dobry, Commissioner |
| Puget Sound Regional Council | vacant |
| TCOMM9-1-1 | Ed Hildreth, Board member |
| Timberland Regional Library | Jeff Kleingartner, Communications Manager |
| The Evergreen State College | Jeanne Rynne, Director of Facilities Services |

CHAIR
Sandra Romero

VICE CHAIR
Virgil Clarkson

SECRETARY
Tom Oliva

Lon D. Wyrick, Executive Director



Sustainable Thurston Task Force

| SUSTAINABLE THURSTON TASK FORCE | MEMBER | ALTERNATE |
|--|---|------------------|
| Bucoda | Alan Vanell | |
| Housing Authority of Thurston County | Theresa Slusher | Chris Lowell |
| Intercity Transit | Karen Messmer | Ryan Warner |
| Lacey | Jeff Gadman | Ron Lawson |
| Olympia | Stephen Buxbaum | Nathaniel Jones |
| Rainier | Dennis McVey | |
| Tenino | Wayne Fournier Dawna Kelley-Donahue (2012) | Dave Watterson |
| Thurston County | Karen Valenzuela | Sandra Romero |
| Transportation Policy Board | Andy Ryder | Doug DeForest |
| Tumwater | Tom Oliva | Joan Cathey |
| WA State Dept of Commerce | Janet Rogerson | Heather Ballash |
| WA State Dept of Enterprise Services | Michael Van Gelder | Ann Sweeney |
| Yelm | Bob Isom | |
| PANEL CHAIRPERSONS | MEMBER | ALTERNATE |
| Blue Ribbon Economic Development Panel | Heber Kennedy | Michael Cade |
| Health and Human Services Panel | Dennis Mahar | John Masterson |
| Housing Panel | Doug DeForest | Tim Seth |
| Local Food Systems Panel | Robert Coit | |
| Public Outreach and Education Panel | Jackie Barrett Sharar | Cynthia Stewart |
| Public Safety Panel | Jim Quackenbush | Brian VanCamp |
| N. County Schools and Transportation Panel | Joan Cathey | Cynthia Pratt |
| S. County Schools and Transportation Panel | Bret Brodersen | |
| Water Infrastructure Panel | Chris Stearns | |
| Energy Work Group | Graeme Sackrison | Ramsey Zimmerman |

Thurston Regional Planning Council Staff

Thera Black, Senior Planner

Paul Brewster, Senior Planner

Jailyn Brown, Senior Planner

Holly Gilbert, Senior Planner

Kathy McCormick, Senior Planner

Steven Morrison, Senior Planner

Karen Parkhurst, Senior Planner

Veena Tabbutt, Senior Planner

Bharath Paladugu, Principal Transportation Modeler

Dave Read, Information Technology Manager

Scott Carte, GIS Coordinator

Michael Burnham, Associate Planner

Fred Evander, Associate Planner

Rosalie Bostwick, Office Manager

Sarah Selstrom, Administrative Assistant

Michael Ambrogi, GIS Analyst

Jeff Holcomb, GIS Analyst

Erin Cahill, Project Assistant

Scott Hollis, Project Assistant

Erin Wheeler, Project Assistant

Christopher Montero, Graphics Technician

Burlina Montgomery, Office Assistant III

Michelle Hernandez, Office Specialist I

Nathan Nadenicek, Intern

Jolene Stanislawski, Intern

Lon Wyrick, Executive Director

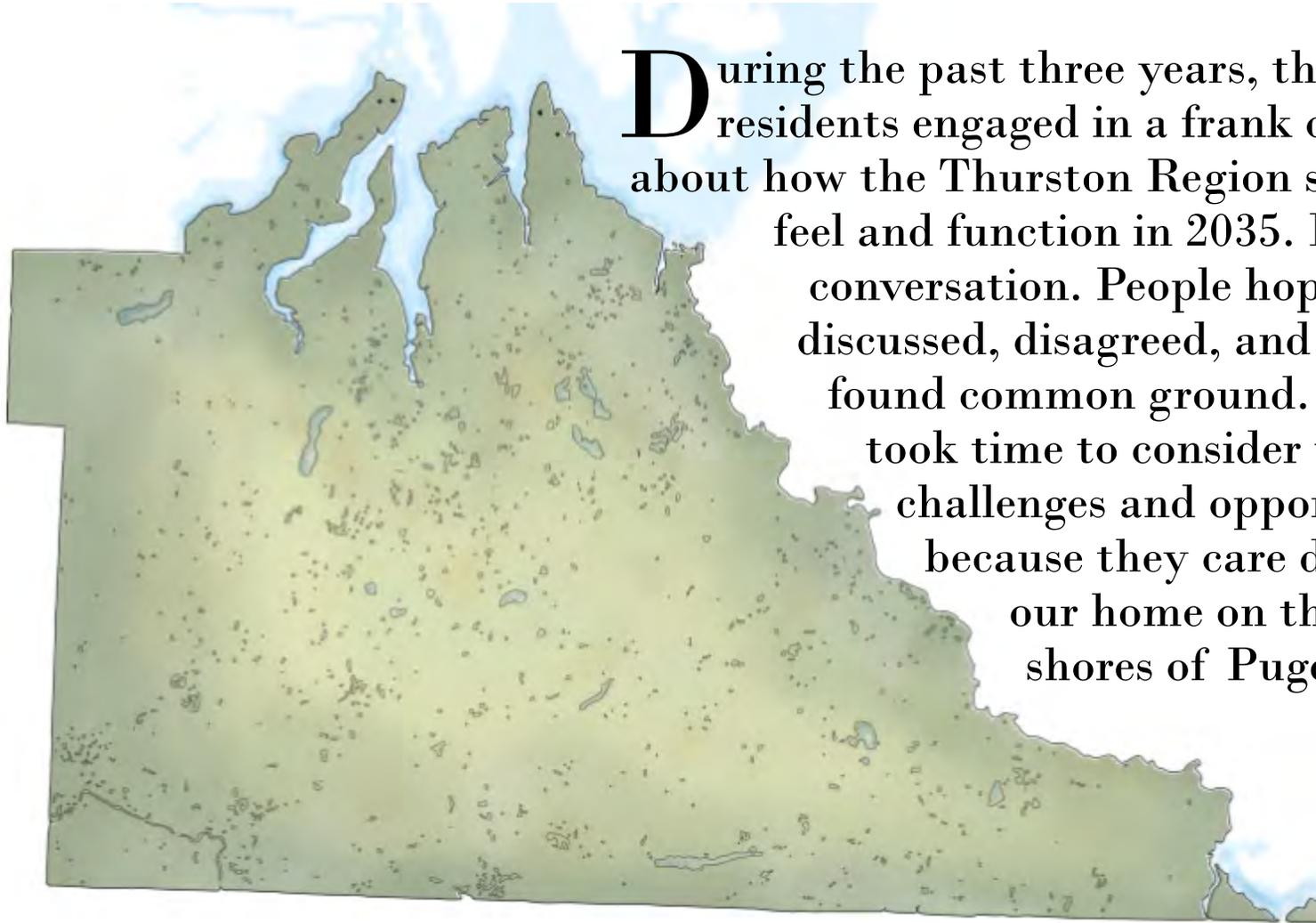
Jared Burbidge, Assistant Director

Special thanks to all jurisdiction staff and residents from throughout the Thurston Region who served as panel members and reviewers throughout the Sustainable Thurston process.

“A livable community must be both equitable and affordable. ...In order for our neighborhoods to thrive, our regions to grow, and our nation to prosper, we must support communities that provide opportunities for people of all ages, incomes, races and ethnicities to live, work, learn, and play together.”

- Secretary Shaun Donovan, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

A Snapshot



During the past three years, thousands of residents engaged in a frank conversation about how the Thurston Region should look, feel and function in 2035. It was a rich conversation. People hoped, worried, discussed, disagreed, and eventually found common ground. Everyone took time to consider the region's challenges and opportunities because they care deeply about our home on the southern shores of Puget Sound.

Creating Places — Preserving Spaces: A Sustainable Development Plan for the Thurston Region incorporates this region’s diverse ideas, articulates a shared vision for the future, sets goals and targets, and recommends actions to achieve them. The document you’re reading seeks to communicate this complex, interconnected strategy with some simple storytelling. It also dares to dream a little bit. So for a brief moment, picture the region in a quarter-century. ...

The Vision

It’s August 2035. As the sun rises, a third-generation farmer named Lynn sips coffee and gazes over lush rows of peas twisting upward from the Skookumchuck River’s silty floodplain. When the morning dew dries, the 55-year-old and her teenaged sons will pick the crisp, green pods and pack them alongside berries and vegetables grown by South County neighbors. It’s Lynn’s day to drive their transportation cooperative’s truck to the Yelm Farmers’ Market and a Tumwater food hub that connects local farmers and ranchers with restaurants and industrial kitchens. The relationships let Lynn continue to work the land, just as her grandparents did, and satisfy strong demand for fresh, local food.



A region preserves farmlands and supports local foods ...

Amid Olympia's Eastside, a 46-year-old welder named Rick wipes sweat from his brow and slides on respiratory mask as the midday sun heats his attic like an oven. A do-it-yourselfer, he's retrofitting the 1940s bungalow with energy-efficient insulation, windows and doors. Thurston Energy provided Rick a rebate to offset the cost of assessing the drafty home's efficiency, and a local bank gave him a low-interest loan for the weatherization improvements. The return on investment is lower power bills — money for another project, perhaps. Rick plans to build a rental apartment above the garage next — but his wife wants a new bathroom first.

As the sun dips down, leafy branches make shadows dance on the sidewalks of Lacey's Woodland District. A 22-year-old business major named Amado and three classmates make a patch of grass their boardroom at South Puget Sound Community

College's Rowe Six campus. They eat pizza and hatch plans to start up a tech company with the help of the campus' entrepreneurial center. A few blocks away, people unpack picnics and unwind during a Huntamer Park jazz concert. Trumpet riffs echo down tree-lined streets, past brick-clad shops with apartment balconies above. A city's heart beats like a bass drum where half-empty office buildings once stood.



An urban center becomes a place to live, work, and play ...

A farmer. A homeowner. A student. ... A co-op. A bank. A college. We are one region with more than 370,000 people in 2035. We created such places and opportunities by thinking in terms of generations — not just years — and viewing local and regional decisions through the lens of sustainability. Thurston County and its cities and towns worked toward common goals and inspired ordinary people such as Lynn, Rick and Amado. Change didn't happen overnight, but some might say Sustainable Thurston was a catalyst.

Back in 2011, the Thurston Regional Planning Council formed a task force that considered how business-as-usual development patterns would shape the region over a quarter-century. We were on an unsustainable trajectory: 13 percent of our growth would occur in rural areas and contribute to the loss of 32 percent of our farmlands and 10 percent of our forestlands by 2035. More grey. Less green — less of the natural capital that makes our region special. Add to this, the region was already struggling to provide emergency services cost-effectively to rural areas.

Online and in person, residents called for a bold vision and aggressive actions to correct course. TRPC policymakers adopted *Creating Places—Preserving Spaces* in late 2013 and urged their municipalities to weave sustainability actions into their decision-making and coordinate regionally. They addressed sewer and septic system challenges to improve water quality, energy and transportation challenges to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and zoning and design challenges to improve housing equity. Small actions added up across the region.

Sustainable Thurston Vision Statement

In one generation — through innovation and leadership — the Thurston Region will become a model for sustainability and livability. We will consume less energy, water, and land, produce less waste, and achieve carbon neutrality. We will lead in doing more while consuming less. Through efficiency, coupled with strategic investments, we will support a robust economy. Our actions will enhance an excellent education system, and foster a healthy, inclusive, and equitable social environment that remains affordable and livable. We will view every decision at the local and regional level through the sustainability lens. We will think in generations, not years. The region will work together toward common goals, putting people in the center of our thinking, and inspire individual responsibility and leadership in our residents.

The urban centers of Olympia, Lacey, and Tumwater added market-rate condos and apartments to their housing mix, and pharmacies and other enterprising businesses followed to serve the new residents. Established neighborhoods near the cities' urban corridors added backyard cottages, duplexes and townhomes, while new subdivisions within cities and urban growth areas have sufficient rooftops to support bus routes and neighborhood shops. Some folks began to drive a little less, walk a little more and get to know their neighbors a little better.



A neighborhood center becomes a place for people to gather ...

Creativity blossomed in the form of a pop-up park on a vacant corner lot, a neighborhood tool library, and a bike cargo distribution company. Such ideas helped folks shrink their carbon footprint, save money, and build community — the social connections that make neighborhoods more self-sufficient following an earthquake or major storm.



A vacant lot ...



... becomes a pop-up park.

The sustainability conversation continued down the road in places such as Rainer and Tenino, whose downtowns began to fill vacant lots and storefronts with entrepreneurs and build new housing for empty-nesters attracted to the small-town atmosphere. Civic boosters in these and other places along State Route 507 promoted tourism and enticed folks from around the region and beyond to stop downtown and stay awhile. Some South County residents began to spend more money closer to home, and Main Street became a main attraction once more.



A South County main street becomes a main attraction once more ...



The Priorities

We know today that real change will require significant time, resources, commitment, and collaboration. *Creating Places — Preserving Spaces* sets a dozen priority goals and targets and recommends roughly 300 discrete actions. Just as important, the Plan identifies first action steps and sustainability outcomes.

| | Priority Goal | Outcomes | Target | First Action Steps |
|--|---|---|---|--|
|  | Create vibrant centers, corridors, and neighborhoods while accommodating growth. | Creating places will support equal access to quality education, services, amenities, and infrastructure, and ensure that we are safe, well-educated, and well-informed. | By 2035, 72 percent of all (new and existing) households in our cities, towns, and unincorporated growth areas will be within a half-mile (comparable to a 20-minute walk) of an urban center, corridor, or neighborhood center with access to goods and services to meet some of their daily needs. | Rethink our existing land-use zoning and regulations in the urban areas to allow for greater mix of uses and densities to support efficient provision of services. Identify priority areas, and begin neighborhood-level planning to create clarity about design, mix of uses, and density and take actions (See full Plan). Find resources for continuing the community conversation about land-use and zoning changes. |
|  | Preserve environmentally sensitive lands, farmlands, forest lands, prairies, and rural lands and develop compact urban areas. | Preserving spaces will result in multiple outcomes, including maintaining viable local food, farm, and forest economies, protecting the environment, as well as using land in urban areas efficiently and effectively for residential, commercial, and industrial uses while preserving open space. | Between 2010 and 2035, no more than 5 percent of new housing will locate in the rural areas, and 95 percent will be within cities, towns, unincorporated growth areas, and tribal reservations. Rural areas are defined as outside of the cities, towns, unincorporated urban growth areas and tribal reservations. | To better understand rural land uses, create and prioritize an inventory of farmlands, forestlands, prairies, and other critical habitats that may be at risk due to development pressure. Take appropriate steps (e.g., incentives, support agricultural economy, purchase or transfer of development rights, rural zoning changes) to achieve goals. |

| | Priority Goal | Outcomes | Target | First Action Steps |
|---|--|--|---|--|
|  | Create a robust economy through sustainable practices. | Creating a robust and sustainable economy will support healthy social and environmental systems, will not use up resources faster than nature renews them, and will share benefits equitably. More local jobs mean people will be able to work and shop closer to where they live, keeping more local dollars recirculating within the region. | The Economic Development Council will develop a Sustainable Economy Index. The “Index” will identify what to measure in order to track progress toward a robust sustainable economy. A target can be developed from the index after it is monitored for several years. | Implement the Sustainable Economy actions. |
|  | Protect and improve water quality, including groundwater, rivers, streams, lakes, and Puget Sound. | Protecting and improving water quality will sustain the region’s environmental, human, and economic health. | Protect small stream basins that are currently ranked as “Intact” or “Sensitive.” Improve and restore as many as possible “Impacted” stream basins. (Note: This target is also used by the Puget Sound Partnership. See Environment Chapter — Guiding Growth — Healthy Watersheds callout for definitions.) | To preserve the stream basins that still have the opportunity to function properly, conduct watershed-based land use planning (i.e., basin plans). Focus on those areas that may be at risk of degradation under current plans and development regulations. Implement adopted plans. |
|  | Plan and act toward zero waste in the region. | Moving toward zero waste will advance efficient use of resources, reduce consumption, maximize recycling, and ensure that products are made to be used, repaired, or recycled back into nature or the marketplace. | Reduce per capita landfill waste by 32 percent by 2035 to achieve no net increase in landfill waste compared to 2010 in Thurston County. Interim Target: Reduce per capita landfill waste by 15 percent by 2020. | Maintain a rate structure that will incentivize waste prevention, as well as implement policy and support programs. |
|  | Ensure that residents have the resources to meet their daily needs. | Ensuring equitable opportunity for affordable housing that does not unduly burden a household will help enable residents to meet other basic household needs such as food, utilities, health care, and transportation. | By 2035, less than 10 percent of total households in Thurston County will be cost-burdened; less than 5 percent will be severely cost-burdened. | To become more strategic in managing scarce social service resources, create a single governing entity to ensure a coordinated and streamlined approach to social service planning and funding in Thurston County. |

| | Priority Goal | Outcomes | Target | First Action Steps |
|---|---|---|---|--|
|  | Support a local food system to increase community resilience, health, and economic prosperity. | Supporting local food systems will contribute to the local economy — helping sustain local farms and provide residents access to healthy food choices. | To be determined after development of a local food systems plan. | Find resources to create a local food systems plan, and support development of a regional food policy council. |
|  | Ensure that the region's water supply sustains people in perpetuity while protecting the environment. | Providing adequate water for all current and future residents will continue to be a fundamental necessity and quality-of-life asset for health, recreation, food production, and economic activities of the region. | Reduce per capita water use by 33 percent by 2035 to achieve no net increase in water use in Thurston County. Interim Target: Reduce per capita water use by 15 percent by 2020. | Find resources to create a water systems plan that explores ways to manage water resources in the Thurston Region more holistically. |
|  | Move toward a carbon-neutral community. | Planning and acting to reduce or offset greenhouse gases will help zero out the net amount of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases the region emits into the atmosphere. Such efforts will also foster local “green” jobs — weatherizing homes, installing solar panels, building energy-efficient residential and commercial buildings — and reduce climate change adaptation costs. | Become a carbon-neutral community by 2050. Supporting target: Achieve a 45 percent reduction of 1990 greenhouse gas emissions by 2035. | Find resources to create a Thurston Region climate action plan. |

| | Priority Goal | Outcomes | Target | First Action Steps |
|--|---|--|---|---|
|  | Maintain air quality standards. | Maintaining air quality will protect the region's health, quality of life, and opportunity to thrive socially and economically. | Continue to meet state and federal air quality standards. PM ₁₀ : 150 micrograms per cubic meter of air (µg/m ³), 24-hour average [state and federal primary/secondary standards]; • PM _{2.5} : 12 µg/m ³ , annual average [federal primary/secondary standards]; • Ozone: 0.075 parts per million (ppm), 8-hour average [federal primary/secondary standards]. | Continue to focus on reducing vehicle miles traveled and improving operational efficiency of the transportation network. |
|  | Provide opportunities for everyone in the Thurston Region to learn about and practice sustainability. | Sustainability education will empower residents to practice sustainability in their homes, neighborhoods, and communities as well as support action necessary to achieve goals and targets. | Integrate education on sustainability and sustainable practices into K-12 curricula; planner's short course, workshops, professional training and other educational opportunities. | Find resources to ensure continued focus on sustainability actions, education, and coordination. |
|  | Make strategic decisions and investments to advance sustainability regionally. | Making decisions and investments that consider effects on achieving short- and long-term sustainability goals and targets will be key to advancing the Thurston Region's bold sustainability vision. This includes working collaboratively and encouraging coordinated and efficient governance. | Create and adopt sustainability checklists for use in all local decision making processes by 2016. | Develop a generic checklist for modification and use by local jurisdictions. Use the list when making decisions such as funding allocations, comprehensive plan amendments, and capital facilities investments. |

The 12 priority goals are broad and interconnected, each with economic, social, and environmental implications. Achieving one goal helps the region achieve others. The table below shows how the priority goals are integral to providing either primary or secondary support to each sustainability element: economy, society and environment.

| Priority Goal | Economy | Social | Environment | Priority Goal | Economy | Social | Environment |
|---|---------|--------|-------------|---|---------|--------|-------------|
| 1  Centers and Corridors | P | P | P | 7  Food Systems | P | P | S |
| 2  Preserve Environment | P | P | P | 8  Water Supply | P | P | P |
| 3  Robust Economy | P | P | S | 9  Carbon Neutrality | S | P | P |
| 4  Water Quality | P | P | P | 10  Air Quality | S | P | P |
| 5  Zero Waste | S | S | P | 11  Sustainability Education | S | P | S |
| 6  Basic Needs | P | P | S | 12  Strategic Decisions | P | P | P |
| P= Primary S= Secondary | | | | | | | |

The Wheel

Think of the Plan's structure as a wheel. The center represents the economically, socially and environmentally sustainable community described in the vision statement. The innermost ring represents the six elements described in the foundational principles and policies. The icons in the next ring represent the 12 priority goals and targets. The outer ring represents the scores of actions necessary to achieve the goals, targets and vision. While every action is important to achieving the central vision, some actions will help the region achieve multiple goals and targets.



The Plan

Not everyone will take the same path forward, but we all have a shared destination. General actions that conclude each of the Plan's six core chapters represent a menu of options for public- and private-sector partners. Some actions are underway and may be expanded. Others will be new for our region. Every action identifies a timeline, lead implementer and partners.

The **Leadership & Participation** chapter, beginning on page 35, underscores that *Creating Places — Preserving Spaces* is a working document of sustainability concepts that are meant to be used by local governments, special purpose districts, non-profit organizations and private citizens to help further their sustainability priorities. Not all concepts are relevant or appropriate in all situations for all partners. The chapter notes that the Plan's goals and actions should be considered a "template for a coordinated approach to sustainable development in the region" and affirms that TRPC policymakers are committed to "advocating for actions that are essential for sustainability and for finding the resources to take such actions."

The chapter explains how achieving three leadership-specific goals (below) and 30 related actions will help the region achieve its sustainability vision.

Goal L-1: Become a model for sustainability and livability.

Identify resources, organizational structure, and educational opportunities to achieve regional sustainability goals.

Goal L-2: Develop regional plans and strategies essential to meeting sustainability priority goals and targets.

Goal L-3: Increase regional coordination and collaboration.



Leadership means taking actions locally and coordinating regionally.

Success will require widespread commitment. At the household level, this means folks integrating sustainability actions into their life and influencing neighbors. At the government level, it means municipalities taking actions locally and coordinating regionally to effect greater change.

In One Generation, the Thurston Region will be a model for **sustainability** and **livability** ...

95

Percent
of new growth
in cities, towns,
UGAs, and tribal
reservations

0

Percent
net loss of
forestlands
and rural
farmlands

34

Percent
reduction
in new
impervious area
in protected
stream basins

The **Community** chapter, beginning on page 49, explains that the places we create and the spaces we preserve reflect our values. The Preferred Land-Use Scenario outlined in the chapter would enhance access to housing and transportation options in urban areas, as well as protect lifestyles and resource lands in rural areas.

Goals and actions that conclude the Community chapter would create the kind of dynamic city and town centers that attract young entrepreneurs, artists, architects, and empty-nesters, alike. Additional actions would increase affordable housing amid close-in neighborhoods, as well as transition transit corridors into an urban form that encourages riding transit, walking and biking.



Buildings step down from the corridor to fit the character and scale of single-family homes and other interior buildings.

The Preferred Land-Use Scenario, which assumes the region would achieve its priority goals and hit the related targets, would result in the following outcomes:

- 95 percent of growth in areas designated for urban growth
- \$1.6 billion savings in road, water, sewer, and other related infrastructure costs
- 43 percent of the population living within a quarter-mile of transit service
- 72 percent of urban households living within a half-mile of goods and services
- 33 percent reduction in land consumption
- No net loss of forestlands
- No net loss of rural farmlands
- 34 percent reduction in new impervious area in protected stream basins
- 31 percent reduction in new impervious area in sensitive stream basins

What is our community land use vision for the future?

In one generation, the Thurston Region's built environment will transition to unique, recognizable places and neighborhoods, fostering a sense of community, supporting a robust economy, and protecting farmlands and natural areas. City and town centers in Bucoda, Grand Mound, Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater, Rainier, Tenino, Rochester, and Yelm will develop or grow into thriving business districts, all with a walkable, well-designed urban form that encourages a mix of housing, goods, services, and places to recreate. Some neighborhoods that are closer in will have greater access to goods and services, as well as increased opportunities for housing choices to fit the needs of the changing population. We'll pay greater attention to design, walkability, accessibility, and affordability — all essential to meet the needs of an aging population and to attract and retain innovators in our community. Suburban, single-family neighborhoods will provide housing choices for families and others that value quiet neighborhoods with private spaces. The rural areas will remain a mixture of rural homes, farms, forest lands, and natural areas, with markedly lower densities of residential growth than the urban area.

Through **efficiency**, coupled with **strategic investments**, we will support a **robust economy ...**

35

Percent
reduction in
landfill waste to
achieve no net
increase

1.6

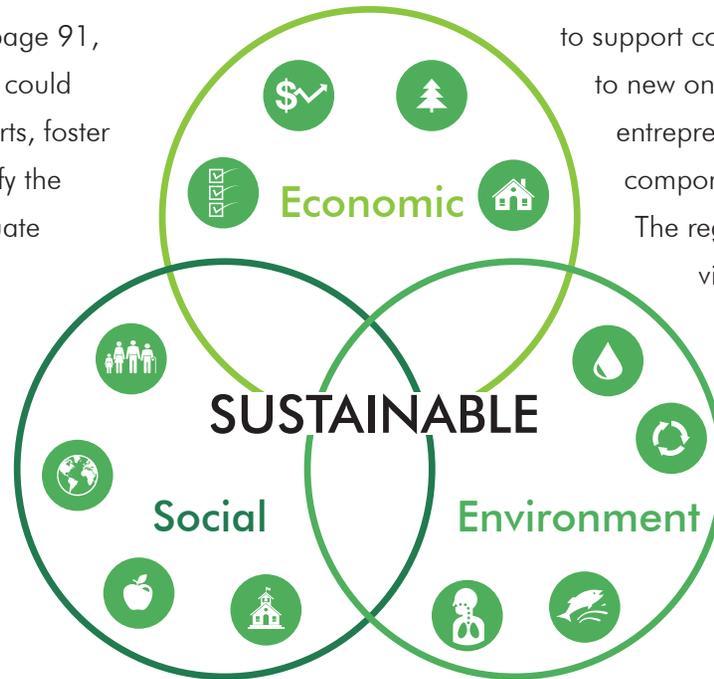
Billion
dollars in
infrastructure
investment
savings

72

Percent of
urban homes
within 1/2-mile
of goods &
services

The **Economy** chapter, beginning on page 91, provides a blueprint for how the region could coordinate economic development efforts, foster industry clusters and innovation, diversify the region’s job base, ensure there’s adequate employment lands, and support a progressive education system. Taking a coordinated and collaborative approach to economic development strategies, initiatives and efforts would help the region attract and retain employers. Businesses would flourish — increase hiring and add to the regional tax base — if jurisdictions regulate them in a consistent manner, the Plan explains.

Fostering industry clusters — concentrations of interconnected businesses, suppliers, and associated institutions — would also create jobs and increase revenue circulation locally. If we want to see our region retain its educated and skilled young people, we need



to support core sectors of our economy and be open to new ones, the Plan explains. Indeed, innovation, entrepreneurship and sustainability are essential components of wealth creation.

The region can also attract and grow economic vitality by supporting young innovators, becoming an early adopter of new technologies, and encouraging entrepreneurship. A key to this is fostering a progressive education system that matches worker skills with employer needs.

Additional economic goals of the Plan include providing robust infrastructure to support economic development, as well as ensuring that there is redevelopment investment along primary transportation corridors and sufficient land for industrial activities. Such goals and related actions — including building telecommunications capacity and completing “last-mile” infrastructure to available commercial lands — would help maintain the region’s economic competitiveness.

A sustainable economy requires collaboration, commitment, and integration among many Thurston Region partners. Economic opportunity cannot outweigh our responsibility to protect people and preserve healthy ecosystems. At the same time, we must recognize that the health of our social infrastructure and natural environment are tied to economic vitality.

The **Opportunities & Choices** chapter, beginning on page 113, shows how the region could create “complete” communities by tying together some of the aforementioned transportation, housing, and economic development issues with health and human services, local food systems, and access to schools. Such communities have efficient and equitable access to healthy food, quality schools, parks, and other opportunities.

Our region recognizes and invests in “complete streets” with sidewalks and bike lanes that support safe travel for people walking and biking or riding in a car or a bus. But it hasn’t always been that way.

Suburban home-building, automobile ownership, and interstate highway construction exploded in the wake of World War II. A single-family home with a little more elbow room and a picket fence epitomized the American dream for many people. However, this shifting land-use pattern made it difficult for these new suburbanites to access grocery stores, jobs, schools, and parks without an automobile. These areas don’t work for everyone today. “Drive mostly” neighborhoods mean dependence on cars to fill every day-to-day need — difficult for the very old, the young, and those who can’t afford multiple car ownership and use.



Complete communities have equitable access to housing and other opportunities.

One example is the Millennial Generation — generally, defined as people born between 1980 and 2000. The percentage of 16-to-24- year-olds with a driver’s license has dropped to less than 70 percent for the first time since 1963. For this generation, safe and efficient transportation assumes walkable neighborhoods, safe bicycle routes, and frequent transit service.

Baby Boomers — born between 1946 and 1964 — who raised families in newfangled suburbs, are also reshaping land use as they retire. Some Boomers aim to age in place, while others will downsize and seek more convenient and accessible housing choices.

If we want to attract the Millennials and retain the Boomers, we need to create complete communities that offer a full range of housing. These trends led to Sustainable Thurston goals and actions to create walkable urban areas — places that provide people opportunities to live, work, shop, and play without having to depend on a private automobile.

This is great news for our health. People living in auto-oriented suburbs tend to drive more, weigh more, and walk less than people living in walkable neighborhoods. Walking reduces the risk of obesity. With many of our neighborhoods built during the latter half of the 20th century designed around cars, the prevalence of obesity may result in today's generation of children being the first in more than 200 years with a shorter lifespan than their parents.



A small commercial area becomes a place where local residents can buy and sell fresh food ...

Creating complete communities will also help eliminate food deserts — parts of the community with little or no access to the fresh, affordable food essential to maintain a healthy diet. Throughout the Sustainable Thurston process, community members expressed concerns about the affordability and accessibility of fresh and local food. To that end, the Opportunities & Choices chapter concludes with some ambitious goals, including enhancing the economic viability of the local food system (e.g., starting a farmer co-op and urban food hub) and ensuring universal access to secure, nutritious and affordable food. Perhaps more than anywhere else in the Plan, this chapter shows how social, economic and environmental sustainability are interconnected.

The **Investment** chapter, beginning on page 167, shows how the region could maximize the use of existing public infrastructure and assets and prioritize and leverage future investments. Municipalities would deliver water, sewer, solid waste, public safety, transportation, and communications services in a more cost-effective manner and champion energy efficiency and renewable energy strategies that bolster energy independence and economic stability.

Providing infrastructure and services for the current population of 252,000 people in the Thurston Region is difficult. Providing infrastructure and services for an additional 120,000 by 2035 will be even more challenging. The state's Growth Management Act calls for concentrating growth in the urban areas, the most efficient and environmentally safe way to accommodate development.

Our existing land-use plans and regulations envision compact growth, and the Preferred Land-Use Scenario sets an ambitious target of accommodating 95 percent of growth in our existing and planned urban areas. This could lead to \$1.6 billion savings in road and associated infrastructure for residential development alone, as well as spur reinvestment in our existing city and town centers. Such savings could help address our aging infrastructure, provide for a more efficient delivery of essential services, and create vitality that will increase tax base return on investment. The chapter concludes with goals and actions related to Infrastructure, Energy, Public Safety, and Solid Waste.



Conserving energy and producing more power locally will help the region save money and protect the environment.

We will consume **less energy, water, and land**; produce **less waste**, and achieve **carbon neutrality ...**

30

Percent
reduction in
annual vehicle
miles traveled
(1990 baseline)

33

Percent
reduction in
water use to
achieve no
net increase

33

Percent
reduction
in land
consumption

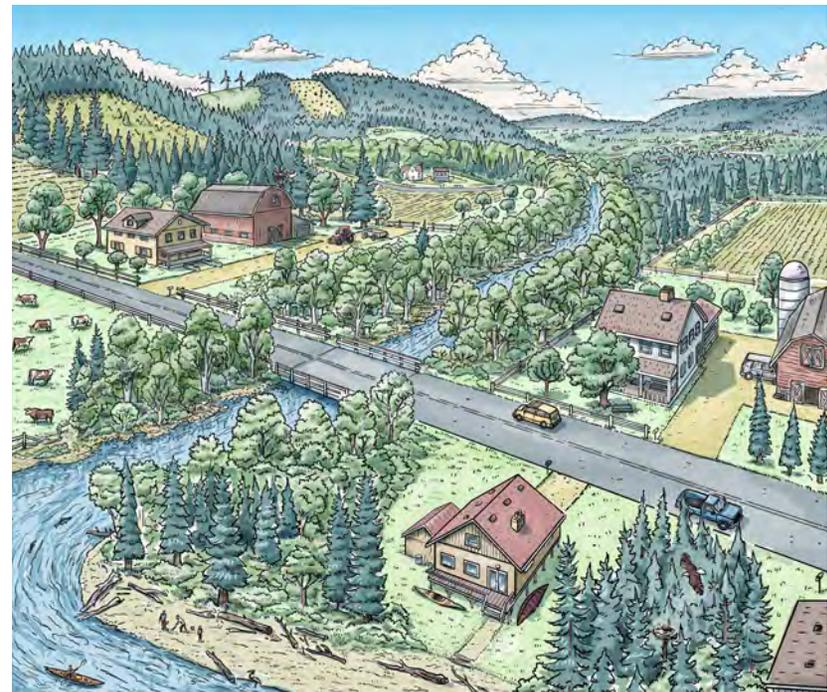
The **Environment** chapter, beginning on page 199, builds upon such infrastructure investments to improve local air and water quality and mitigate global climate change.

Residents of the Thurston Region want a healthy environment with clean air for breathing and clean water for drinking, recreating, and harvesting food. In coming decades, sustaining the natural environment will require protecting water quality and quantity and reducing emissions that contribute to air pollution and climate change.

Our region has a strong commitment to environmental protection. In a 2011 Sustainable Thurston survey, the top three issues identified by people as important to build a community that is sustainable for everyone were:

- Maintain drinking water;
- Maintain stream and Puget Sound water quality; and,
- Maintain air quality.

Our region recognizes that protecting environmental quality is good for economic health and our quality of life. This ethic is reflected in the vision: “In one generation — through innovation and leadership — the Thurston Region will become a model for sustainability and livability. We will consume less energy, water, and land, produce less waste, and achieve carbon neutrality” To achieve this bold vision, the Plan sets priority goals and targets related to air, waste, land, water, and greenhouse gas emissions.



Sustainability is a balance of protecting personal property rights and the natural environment for all.

The Conversation

We live in a global economy. Much of what we consume is produced elsewhere and vice versa. But the document you're reading asks you to imagine a time in the not-so-distant future when more of the foods we grow and dollars we earn stay within the Thurston Region. It imagines that more of our town centers, neighborhoods, and urban corridors support greater transportation and housing choices. And it imagines that more of our homegrown entrepreneurs start companies and hire workers right where they started. This is what sustainability looks like.

The document you're reading is the result of a conversation that began nearly three years ago — but it's also just the start of a new one. *Creating Places — Preserving Spaces* articulates a clear vision for 2035, sets goals and targets, and recommends actions to achieve them. Success requires sustained commitment and collaboration on the part of everyone in the community. You, your friends, your neighbors — everyone. The conversation must continue around kitchen tables, council chambers, coffee shops — everywhere.

The Thurston Regional Planning Council will continue to convene community stakeholders, seek resources to implement sustainability actions, and share information about the region's progress. In the meantime, you can read *Creating Places — Preserving Spaces* and related materials online at www.sustainablethurston.org. We have the imagination and power to create a more socially, economically and environmentally sustainable future. Let's get to work.



How will you continue the sustainability conversation?

