

# The Main Street Journal

A TRPC Newsletter Reporting Sustainable Thurston Activities



SustainableThurston.org

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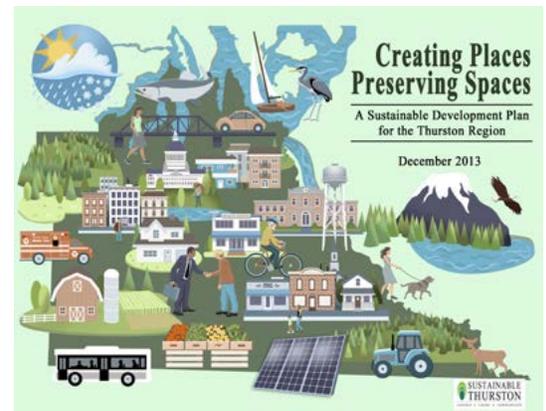
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## Sustainable Thurston garners awards for smart planning practices

The Thurston Regional Planning Council kicked off its landmark Sustainable Thurston project four years ago with a simple question: How do you want your community to look, feel, and function in 2035?

Residents from around the region spoke up and helped craft the project's flagship plan, *Creating Places—Preserving Spaces: A Sustainable Development Plan for the Thurston Region*, which integrates sustainability principles into decision making to achieve a healthy environment, robust economy, and thriving society. Now, as local planners and policymakers begin to



implement the ambitious sustainability plan, folks from beyond the region are taking notice.

See *AWARDS*, page 2

## South Thurston County eyes 'STEDI' economy

Nearly three years ago, the Thurston Economic Development Council launched the South Thurston Economic Development Initiative (STEDI) to promote community and economic development in the South County communities of Bucoda, Rainier, Tenino, Yelm, Grand Mound, and Rochester.

See *STEDI*, page 11



Photo: TRPC

Bucoda's past and present.



# Leadership & Participation



## Revising the County Wide Planning Policies

In March, TRPC's Urban Growth Management Subcommittee sent the Board of County Commissioners a revised draft of the County Wide Planning Policies that incorporates Sustainable Thurston's foundational principles and policies.

These principles and policies are broad and ambitious, covering each of the plan's chapter topics: Leadership & Public Participation, Community, Economy, Opportunities & Choices, Investment, and Environment. They range from championing energy efficiency and maximizing existing infrastructure and investments, to partnering across jurisdictions and breaking down institutional communication barriers. Integrating them into the

County Wide Planning Policies helps ensure that social, economic and environmental sustainability will remain integral to local decision making in the decades ahead.

All counties planning under the state's Growth Management Act are required to adopt County Wide Planning Policies, which establish a framework for developing and adopting county and city comprehensive plans. Elements within the County Wide Planning Policies — first adopted in our region more than 20 years ago — are those things held in common across all of the jurisdictional comprehensive plans and that form the foundation of those plans.

## Awards

Continued from page 1

In March, Futurewise — formerly 1000 Friends of Washington — honored Sustainable Thurston with the 2015 Local Government Excellence award. The Seattle-based nonprofit's award recognizes policy or planning initiatives and programs that support the principles of smart growth.

The Sustainable Thurston project has garnered recognition from several other organizations, including the: Planning Association of Washington/American Planning Association—Washington Chapter (2014 Planning Award, Sustainability Category); State of Washington (2014 Governor's Smart Vision Award); Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (2013 Honorable Mention, Outstanding Achievement). For more information about Sustainable Thurston, visit [www.sustainablethurston.org](http://www.sustainablethurston.org).

# theProfile

### Looking for more information about Thurston County?



Visit [trpc.org/theProfile](http://trpc.org/theProfile) to access data, trends, and analyses for Thurston County and its jurisdictions.

## Tracking Sustainable Thurston progress

How do we measure the region's progress in implementing Sustainable Thurston? The plan has a dozen priority goals — several of which have corresponding targets for 2035. TRPC will provide a progress update every few years in its Benchmarks and Indicators report. Expect a new one by the end of this year, but here's a sneak peak in the meantime:

### Goal 1: Create vibrant centers, corridors, and neighborhoods while accommodating growth.

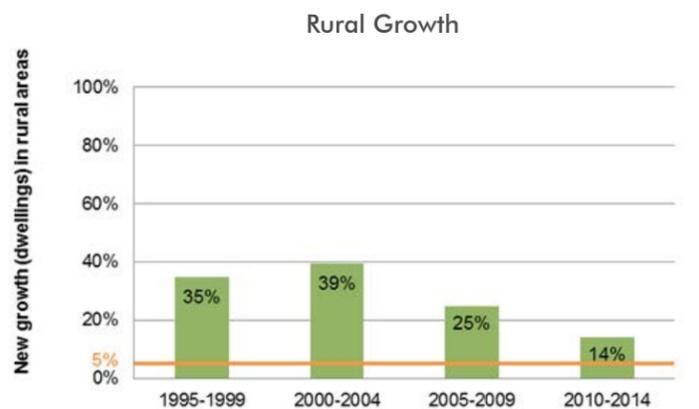
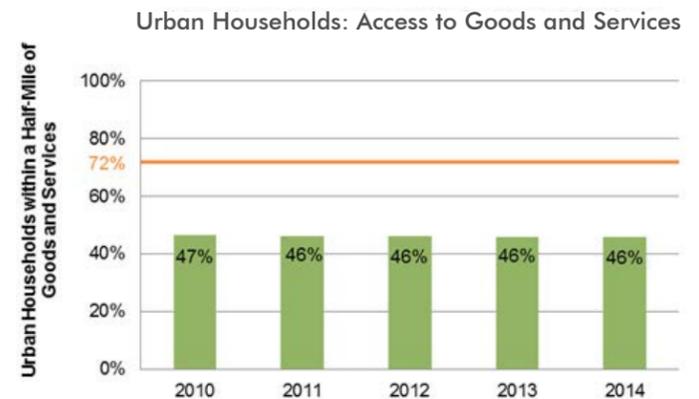
**Target:** By 2035, 72 percent of all (new and existing) households in our cities, towns, and unincorporated growth areas will be within a half-mile of an urban center, corridor, or neighborhood center with access to goods and services to meet some of their daily needs.

How are we doing? We're losing ground on this indicator — but only slightly — and we're still far from our target. The key to success will be two-fold — re-examining our land-use plans to allow for small neighborhood commercial centers in traditionally residential neighborhoods, as well as making sure plans allow for small increases in residential density that will help provide customers for small businesses.

### Goal 2: Preserve environmentally sensitive lands, farmlands, forest lands, prairies, and rural lands and develop compact urban areas.

**Target:** 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.

How are we doing? The percentage of new housing locating in the county's rural areas has been decreasing over the last few decades. We're on our way to hitting our target if the trend continues. Over the coming



years, Thurston County will be working on a variety of programs and policies, such as the purchase or transfer of development rights, landowner incentives, habitat conservation, and rural zoning changes that will keep us moving in the right direction.

# Community



## Greening local comprehensive plans

Cities throughout the region are integrating Sustainable Thurston into their comprehensive plans — the chief planning documents required by the state’s Growth Management Act.

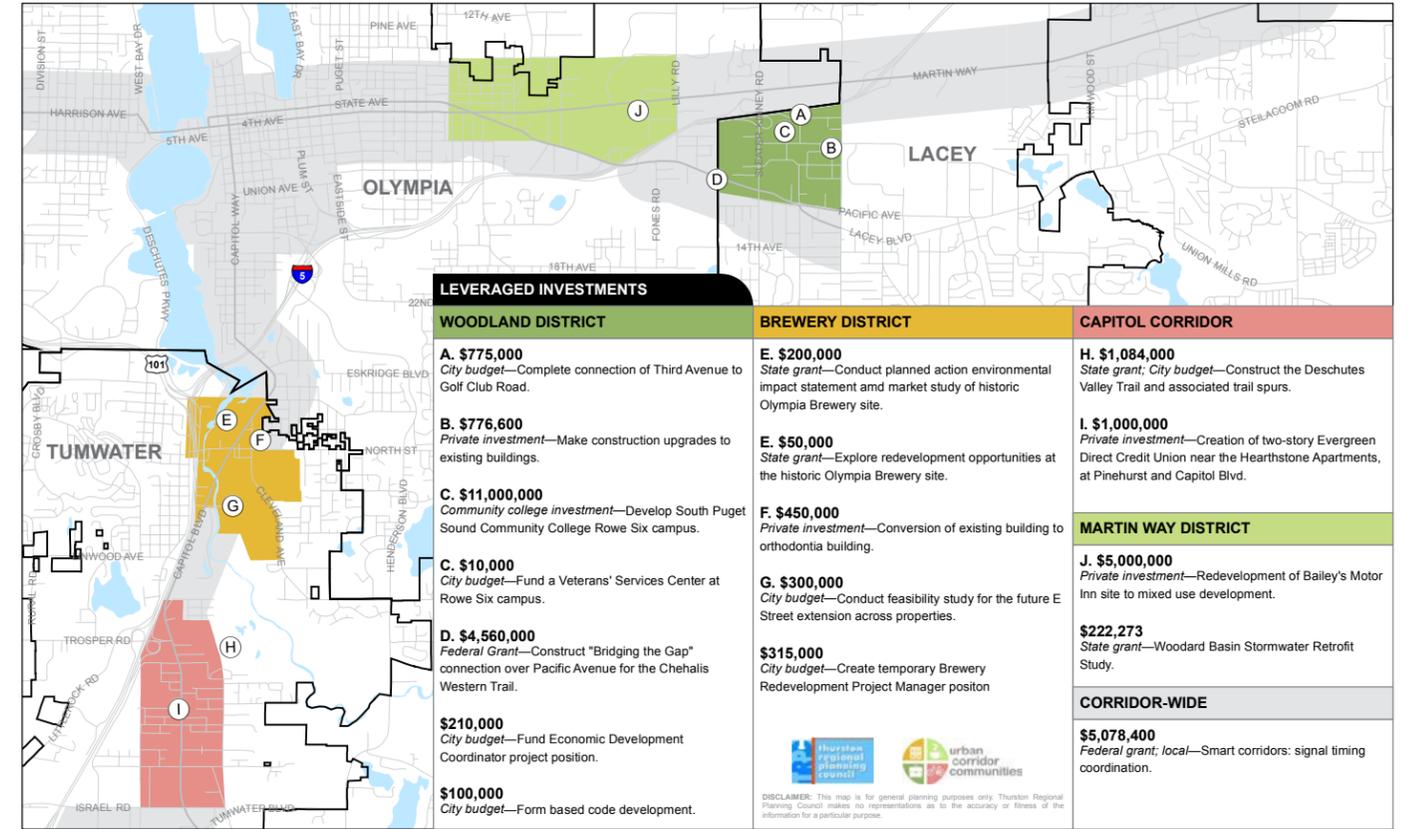
Olympia is drafting an action plan that lays out what residents want to do during the next six years to accomplish goals of the recently updated Olympia Comprehensive Plan, which reflects many Sustainable Thurston principles. These include boosting active transportation and focusing infill and redevelopment amid downtown and along the Olympia urban corridor that connects Tumwater and Lacey. Going forward, the City plans to track and report out comprehensive plan action plan progress via community indicators related to the environment, economy, downtown, community services, and neighborhoods.

Lacey policymakers, meanwhile, reached consensus recently on several draft Lacey Comprehensive Plan goals and policies that will further Sustainable Thurston’s vision and goals. These include: encouraging density and infill development around existing neighborhood centers as well as corridor “nodes” served by transit and utilities; ensuring diversification of employment opportunities so residents can “work, live, shop, and play” within close proximity; and, strategically pursuing annexations

that provide financial benefit, are presently provided with city services, or have requested services to protect groundwater resources. The draft plan will go out for public review this summer.

Tumwater, too, is updating its comprehensive plan with Sustainable Thurston-supportive language — notably, creating “vibrant city centers and activity nodes” along the urban corridor, and creating “safe and vibrant neighborhoods with places that build community and encourage active transportation.” Add to this, the Tumwater Comprehensive Plan incorporates two recently approved subarea plans — the Capitol Boulevard Corridor Plan and the Brewery District Plan — which include zoning regulations and design guidelines consistent with Sustainable Thurston urban corridor principles.

To the east, Yelm is comparing Yelm Comprehensive Plan policies to those in Sustainable Thurston. The Yelm Planning Commission may recommend changes to existing policies based on the review — although the City has long implemented policies consistent with the regional plan, including promoting development within the existing city limits — rather than amid the unincorporated urban growth area — and creating a strong central core and neighborhoods.



## Leveraging district planning dollars

Back in 2011, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development invested about \$750,000 in our region — grant money that was matched by more than \$500,000 of local funds and staff time.

To date, the initial investments have leveraged about \$10 million of transportation investments in our community, according to a TRPC analysis. Add to this, more than \$20 million is being invested in urban corridor projects and personnel (see map above).

### Uses for the money include:

- Economic Development Coordinator positions for corridor districts;

- Feasibility, pre-design, and construction projects for key street and trail networks;
- Planned action environmental impact statements and economic studies;
- Construction upgrades and major redevelopment projects.

The actions are consistent with several of Sustainable Thurston’s priority goals — notably, creating vibrant centers, corridors, and neighborhoods while accommodating growth. For more information, visit [www.trpc.org/Urban-Corridors](http://www.trpc.org/Urban-Corridors).

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Rural & Tribal Transportation  
[www.ThurstonRT.org](http://www.ThurstonRT.org)



## Remaking South County's 'Main Street'

Rainier, Tenino, and Bucoda are updating their respective comprehensive plans with principles that support brisker commercial and pedestrian activity along busy State Route 507, which doubles as the communities' "Main Street."

Catalysts for such efforts include Sustainable Thurston and the ongoing Main Street 507 project. Last year, the TRPC-led Main Street 507 project team worked with residents, businesses, policymakers, transportation engineers, and other stakeholders to brainstorm and design concepts for SR 507 improvements in Rainier and Tenino — such as sidewalk bulb-outs, street trees, pedestrian crossings, and roundabouts. Now the communities are seeking funding for projects that have garnered policymaker support.



The Main Street 507 project dovetails with several Sustainable Thurston goals and actions — notably, creating safe and vibrant South County city and town centers that foster entrepreneurship, active transportation, civic pride and a sense of place. For more information, visit [www.trpc.org/Main-Street-507](http://www.trpc.org/Main-Street-507).



Photo: TRPC  
Downtown Rainier's main street is open for business.

## Economy



## Master planning the Port's Tumwater properties

The Port of Olympia initiated a planning process late last year to guide economic development and job creation within property districts both north and west of the Olympia Regional Airport.

The project will result in a real estate development master plan for the New Market Industrial Campus and Tumwater Town Center and identify: market-based development opportunities; recommendations for comprehensive plan updates; infrastructure investments; necessary environmental reviews; and, other actions necessary to implement proposed projects.

A 14-member Port advisory committee will evaluate a range of topics, including soils and hydrology, transportation, market analysis, and input from a series of public meetings. The first public meeting was held in March.

The Port planning effort is consistent with several Sustainable Thurston goals, including providing robust infrastructure to support economic development, and coordinating economic development efforts to attract and retain businesses and jobs. For a project map and more information, visit [www.trpc.org/PortofOlympiaProject](http://www.trpc.org/PortofOlympiaProject).

## Building an SPSCC campus & EDC hub in Lacey's core

South Puget Sound Community College (SPSCC) is on pace to open a campus this fall amid Lacey's Woodland District.

The Rowe Six campus — a remodeled building complex adjacent to the Lacey Transit Center — will replace the college's Hawks Prairie campus and total about 100,000 square feet.

The Economic Development Council will move into an expanded office on the new campus and open a business and entrepreneurial center. Services will include business counseling, government contracting, and a variety of business-development resources to continue efforts to recruit, retain, and expand market opportunities for businesses and entrepreneurs throughout the region.



Image: SPSCC Artist's rendering of the Rowe Six campus on 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

The collaborative project is consistent with several Sustainable Thurston goals, including creating an innovation culture to encourage entrepreneurship, and fostering a progressive education system to match worker skills with employer needs. For more information about the project, contact the EDC at 360-754-6320.

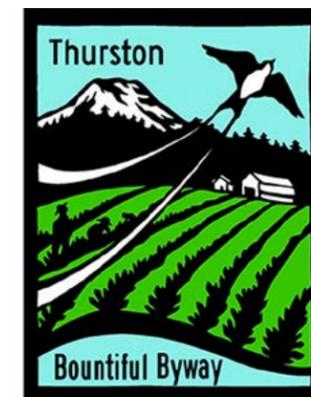
## Following the beautiful Bountiful Byway

Take a trip on the Bountiful Byway — by car, carpool, transit, bike, or foot — and discover yummy food, enchanting entertainment, unique stores, leafy parks and trails, historic properties, and interesting arts and cultural stops.

In March 2014, months of work with a variety of partners culminated in the designation of the Thurston Bountiful Byway. The Thurston County Board of County Commissioners celebrated the agricultural lands, beautiful scenery, and exciting destinations on this rural scenic route.

County Commissioner Sandra Romero, members of the Agritourism Committee, other partners, and the public gathered that fall to launch the opening of the Bountiful Byway, showcasing the new directional signs along the route. The partners: local farmers and business owners, the Thurston Regional Planning Council, Thurston County

WSU Extension, Thurston Economic Development Council, and the Olympia-Lacey-Tumwater Visitor and Convention Bureau. The Bountiful Byway developed out of Romero's desire to support the rural communities by promoting agricultural tourism, also known as "agritourism." In the first phase, the County created a special "layer" of zoning that encourages and removes barriers to agricultural endeavors. The "Byway" came next. The route begins in the Nisqually Valley; heads south to Yelm, Rainier, Tenino, Bucoda, Grand Mound, Rochester, and Littlerock; continues west to the Capital Forest; and ends at the intersection of Mud Bay Road and Delphi Road Southwest. For more information, visit <http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/permitting/agriculture/agriculture-tourism.html>.



# Opportunities & Choices



## Implementing Thurston Thrives

Building on the work of Sustainable Thurston, Thurston County initiated Thurston Thrives to improve the health of all residents.

In 2013-14, the Board of County Commissioners (Board of Health) selected the project’s advisory panel and action team leads. The teams — Child & Youth Resilience, Clinical and Emergency Care, Community Design, Community Resilience, Economy, Education, Environment, Food and Housing — started with a review of Sustainable Thurston’s data and strategies. The teams



then mapped strategies, set measures, and continued action strategies already underway.

In 2015, the Thurston Thrives Coordinating Council — backbone structure for the initiative — is moving into its implementation phase. This public/private partnership will support Thurston Thrives’ various action hubs in communication, measurement, and promotion. The Thurston County Chamber Foundation will serve as fiscal agent for the coordinating council.

Thurston Thrives also will continue to align within strategies and across teams. There are several examples of progress so far, including the Community Investment Partnership. Local Jurisdictions and the United Way of Thurston County combined social service funding and are asking applicants how their projects/programs further the work of Thurston Thrives. For more information, visit <http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/thrives/>.

## Local food system council takes root and grows

The Thurston Food System Council is a grassroots organization composed of a diverse group of community stakeholders committed to fostering collaboration and active engagement in the local food system. Comprised of members from the Sustainable Thurston Thurston Thrives food groups, and other stakeholders, the council meets monthly to explore ways to build a thriving local food system.

Over the past several years, the Thurston Food System Council has sponsored several community gatherings and food celebrations and joined forces with the Asset Building Coalition Food Hub. In 2015, the council will update the Thurston Thrives Strategy Maps, and focus on preserving resource lands and making connections between institutional buyers — such as schools and hospitals — and local growers and processors. To learn more, visit <http://thurstonfoodcouncil.org/about-us/>.

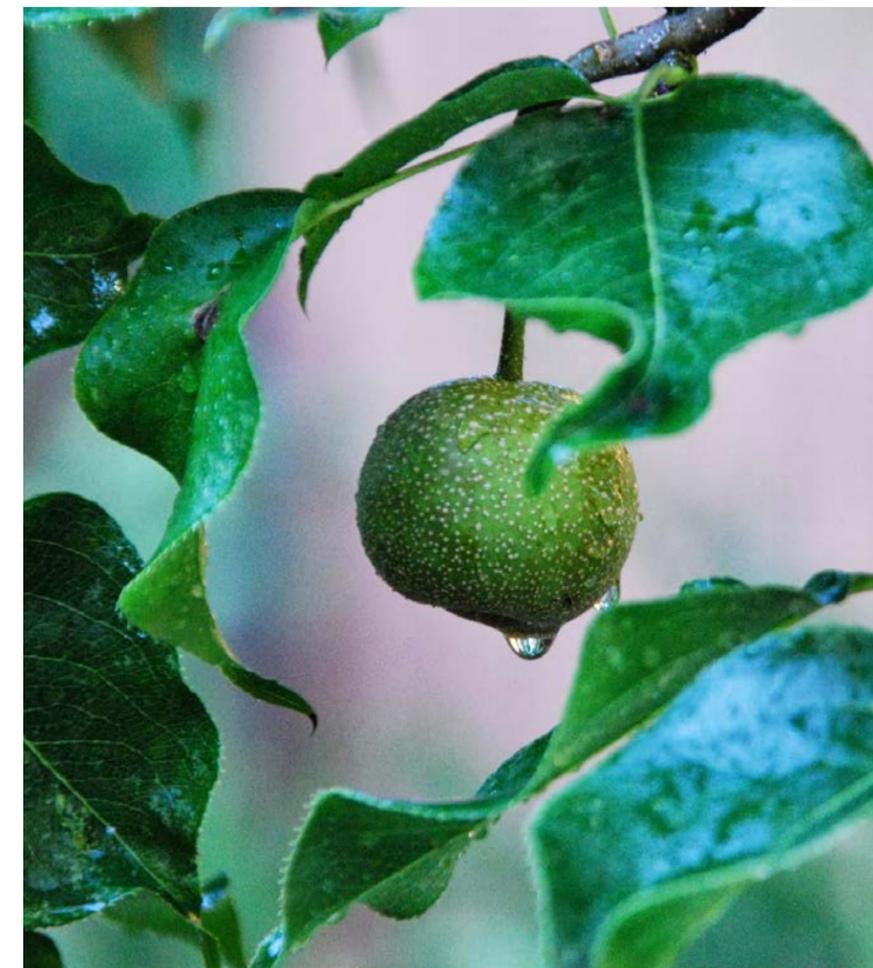


Photo: TRPC

A backyard pear orchard in Lacey.

## Solving problems with voluntary stewardship

Sustainable Thurston set a number of priority goals, including: preserve resource lands; protect and improve water quality; create a robust economy; support local food systems; ensure a clean and ample water supply; and, maintain air quality. All of these goals play into the work of Thurston County’s Voluntary Stewardship Plan.

This grassroots initiative, spurred by the Washington State Legislature and non-profit Ruckelshaus Center,

challenges communities to explore new ways to protect critical areas while maintaining and enhancing the viability of agriculture. Rather than a one-size-fits all regulation, a more site-specific cooperative venture is envisioned.

Last year, the Voluntary Stewardship Advisory Group reviewed agricultural and environmental data, discussed historic interactions and frustrations, and considered barriers and opportunities. Technical and agricultural

subcommittees formed and deliberated. This year, the group is moving to draft the plan, identify roles and responsibilities, develop outreach strategies, and work with the State Conservation Commission, which will approve the plan. To learn more, visit: <http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/planning/vsp/voluntary-stewardship-home.html>.



Photo: WSU Extension — Thurston County

Aquaculture on the shores of Puget Sound.

# Environment



## Guiding growth to protect water quality

Thurston County and TRPC are collaborating on a pair of projects that bring watershed science into local policies to protect the water quality of our creeks, rivers, lakes, and Puget Sound — a priority goal of the Sustainable Thurston plan.

The first project, which wraps up in mid-2015, focuses on the McLane Creek, Black Lake, and Woodard Creek basins that cover parts of Olympia, Tumwater, and unincorporated Thurston County. The second project, which began in early 2015 and continues through 2016, focuses on the Deschutes River Watershed.



Photo: TRPC

The Deschutes River in spring.

Both projects began by exploring the land cover, pollution levels, and other current conditions of the watersheds. The analyses help TRPC and the County identify areas that are at highest risk from future development and areas that can benefit most from protection and restoration of ecological functions. Computer simulations then assess the effects of various future strategies, taking into account factors such as projected population, employment, and transportation.

Surveys and additional feedback from the watersheds' residents help shape land-use recommendations — anything from adjusting cities' urban growth area boundaries and zoning to creating new requirements and incentives for low-impact development, tree retention, and stream bank restoration. The bottom line: Each watershed is different, so there is no one-size-fits-all approach to management and protection. Local jurisdictions may choose which management strategies fit their community best.

The projects are supportive of the Sustainable Thurston goal of protecting, preserving, and restoring streams, wetlands, and shorelines to protect water quality.

For more information, visit [www.trpc.org/Watersheds](http://www.trpc.org/Watersheds).

## Strengthening local stormwater standards

When it rains in the Pacific Northwest, much of the stormwater flows via pavement and pipes into our waterways, picking up petroleum and other pollutants along the way. To remedy this, the state Department of Ecology's new municipal stormwater permit requires Thurston County, Olympia, Lacey, Tumwater, and other urban municipalities to make rain gardens, porous pavement, and other low-impact development (LID) practices the preferred and commonly used approach to site development. Put simply, LID minimizes impervious surfaces, maximizes native vegetation retention, and filters stormwater on site as much as possible.

Engineers, planners, and other technical experts from each of the four jurisdictions are reviewing their respective codes, plans, and standards and considering ways to encourage LID practices, per the Ecology permit. Municipal staff will continue to share ideas and elicit feedback from developers and other private-sector stakeholders in the coming months and make recommendations to policymakers in 2016. The



Photo: City of Olympia

Olympia City Hall's green roof helps filter stormwater.

collaborative efforts implement the following Sustainable Thurston action: Adopt new development regulations to require the use of low-impact development practices where feasible.

To learn more about the project and explore an interactive map of some of the region's LID projects, visit [www.trpc.org/LID](http://www.trpc.org/LID).

## STEDI

*Continued from page 1*

STEDI efforts thus far have included analyzing economic conditions in the communities and offering resources to support new and existing businesses. Free workshops and counseling for small-business owners have proved some of the most popular initiatives, as participants have learned tools such as how to set and achieve sales goals and how to use measurements to analyze success.

The STEDI efforts dovetail with several Sustainable Thurston goals — notably, creating safe and vibrant South County city and town centers that foster

entrepreneurship, active transportation, civic pride, and a sense of place. For more information, visit <http://www.thurstonedc.com/programs-services/stedi/>.



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# Investment



## Creating a disaster-resilient region

Thurston County residents have experienced their share of earthquakes, floods, volcanic eruptions, landslides, and severe winter storms. Nature’s fury will continue, unfortunately, and the hazards we face can cause injuries, death, damage to infrastructure, and significantly disrupt people’s lives. Recovery from these events is slow and results in significant economic hardships for both the public and private sectors.

Sustainable Thurston identified several public safety actions to create a resilient region by improving disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. Hazard mitigation can help prevent future losses from occurring through projects such as elevating existing homes in flood-prone areas, performing seismic retrofits to older buildings, or restricting development from occurring near steep slopes that may someday fail unexpectedly.

Last year, Thurston County received a Hazard Mitigation Program Grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to update the region’s plan. TRPC is partnering with Thurston County to facilitate the multi-jurisdictional plan update. Representatives from cities, fire districts, school districts, Intercity Transit, and many other organizations have met monthly since September 2014

to review the plan’s goals and objectives, review hazard information, and update mitigation strategies that will help make communities safer.



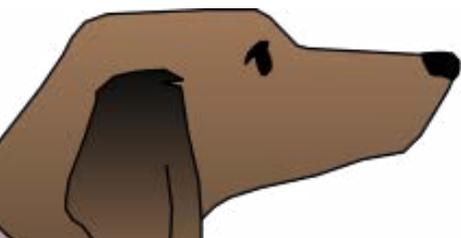
Photo: TRPC

Mt. Rainier is the nation’s tallest active volcano.

Local governments must adopt a federally approved mitigation plan in order to apply for federal mitigation grants. The third edition of the Thurston Region’s Hazard Mitigation Plan is expected to be completed by the end of 2015. For more information, visit [www.trpc.org/Hazard-Mitigation](http://www.trpc.org/Hazard-Mitigation).

## Got a nose for news?

Tell us your sustainability story, and we’ll post it on [sustainablethurston.org’s](http://sustainablethurston.org/s) newsfeed.



### What’s New

#### Sustainable Thurston

As implementation of the amb...  
March 17, Futurewise will hono...  
Excellence award.  
Read on...