

Introduction

The Thurston Region is the economic and cultural heart of South Puget Sound. Government, education, health care, manufacturing, and service sectors fuel our economy. Ports, freeways, and railroads move our goods, and leafy neighborhoods, urban centers, and open spaces provide us places to live, work, and play. But it's our people — our progressiveness and inclusiveness — that make our growing community attractive to new residents and adaptive to new ideas. The choices we make today will shape our community's economic, environmental, and social sustainability in the coming decades.

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

Our region's wants and needs are changing. The share of the population age 65 and older is projected to grow from 12 percent today to 19 percent by 2035. An increasing number of young people are foregoing or delaying marriage and parenthood. New high school and college graduates are



substituting shiny cars for smart phones and seeking out urban areas instead of suburbs. We are a moderate-sized community — some 250,000 people call our region home. If we continue to grow at the rate we have in the past, our population will increase by about 120,000 people by 2035.

What sort of homes will we need in the future? Will we be nimble and responsive to our changing needs? What jobs will we have, and how will we get to them? Where will we shop, recreate, and interact with each other? And, how will we preserve and protect our streams, skies, forests, farms, and prairies — the natural capital that makes the region special?

Change comes with many challenges and opportunities. This ambitious plan — the first of its kind in the region's history — seeks to address those challenges and opportunities in a comprehensive way. Put simply, the purpose of the plan, *Creating Places – Preserving Spaces: A Sustainable Development Plan for the Thurston Region*, is to identify the actions needed to integrate sustainability into all regional decision-making to achieve a healthy economy, society, and environment.

The Sustainable Thurston 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. 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, cultivate a healthy environment, and foster an 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 Priority Goals, Targets and Action Steps: To measure progress toward achieving the vision, the Sustainable Thurston Task Force identified the following priority goals and targets. These goals and targets represent the cumulative effects of the broad range of actions outlined in the Plan. The first two priority goals and targets (the land-use goals) are essential to achieving the other goals and targets.

Sustainability is a balance of quality of life, economic vitality, and environmental health. The priority goals and targets measure this balance. If progress is not made on all of the goals, the *balance* is not achieved, and additional actions must be taken.

Priority Goal	Target	First Action Steps
 <p>Create vibrant centers, corridors, and neighborhoods while accommodating growth.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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, begin neighborhood-level planning to create clarity about design, mix of uses, and density, and take actions. Find resources for continuing the community conversation about land-use and zoning changes.</p>
 <p>Preserve environmentally sensitive lands, farmlands, forest lands, prairies, and rural lands and develop compact urban areas.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Take appropriate steps (e.g., incentives, support agricultural economy, purchase or transfer of development rights, rural zoning changes) to achieve goals.</p>
 <p>Create a robust economy through sustainable practices.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Implement the Sustainable Economy actions.</p>

	Priority Goal	Target	First Action Steps
	Protect and improve water quality, including groundwater, rivers, streams, lakes, and Puget Sound.	Protect small stream basins that are currently ranked as “Intact” or “Sensitive”. Improve and restore as many as possible “Impacted” stream basins.	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.	Reduce per capita landfill waste by 32 percent by 2035 to achieve no net increase in landfill waste compared to 2010 in Thurston County.	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.	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.
	Support a local food system to increase community resilience, health, and economic prosperity.	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.	Reduce per capita water use by 33 percent by 2035 to achieve no net increase in water use in Thurston County.	Find resources to create a water systems plan that explores ways to manage water resources in the Thurston Region more holistically.

Priority Goal	Target	First Action Steps
	<p>Move toward a carbon-neutral community.</p> <p>Become a carbon-neutral community by 2050. Supporting target: Achieve a 45 percent reduction of 1990 greenhouse gas emissions by 2035.</p>	<p>Find resources to create a Thurston Region climate action plan.</p>
	<p>Maintain air quality standards.</p> <p>Continue to meet state and federal air quality standards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PM₁₀: 150 micrograms per cubic meter of air ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$), 24-hour average [state and federal primary/secondary standards]; • PM_{2.5}: 12 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, annual average [federal primary/secondary standards]; • Ozone: 0.075 parts per million (ppm), 8-hour average [federal primary/secondary standards]. 	<p>Continue to focus on reducing vehicle miles traveled and improving operational efficiency of the transportation network (e.g., “Smart Corridors” — see Environment chapter).</p>
	<p>Provide opportunities for everyone in the Thurston Region to learn about and practice sustainability.</p> <p>Integrate education on sustainability and sustainable practices into K-12 curricula, as well as planner’s short courses, workshops, professional training, and other educational opportunities.</p>	<p>Find resources to ensure continued focus on sustainability actions, education, and coordination.</p>
	<p>Make strategic decisions and investments to advance sustainability regionally.</p> <p>Create and adopt sustainability checklists for use in all local decision making processes by 2016.</p>	<p>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.</p>

Foundational Principles & Policies:

To support the Sustainable Thurston vision, the Plan establishes 10 foundational principles and related policies, developed using input from expert panels, engaged residents, surveys, and the best information available. Together, these principles and policies articulate the region's definition of sustainability:

Enhance quality of life, foster economic vitality, and protect the environment while balancing our needs today with those of future residents.

Sustainable Thurston

Enhance Quality of Life — Foster Economic Vitality — Protect the Environment

Ten Foundational Principles

The Thurston Region will:

- Balance our needs today with those of future residents to protect and enhance quality of life.
- Champion a diverse economy and job opportunities that support community and household resilience, health, and well-being.
- Meet basic human needs of clean water and air, healthy food, adequate housing, quality education, public safety, and equal access, regardless of socio-economic status.
- Offer engagement opportunities and information, encouraging choices that contribute to individual, household, and community health and well-being.
- Protect the natural environment while acknowledging the interdependence of a healthy environment and healthy economy.
- Take action to conserve resources, increase use of renewable resources and decrease dependence on non-renewable resources.
- Preserve the unique identities of existing urban, suburban, and rural communities in a way that protects what matters most and improves what can be better.
- Acknowledge interdependence of communities within — and external to — our region; recognize impacts of our region upon the world, and impacts of the world upon our region.
- Foster open communication and transparent processes that encourage community-wide participation.
- Support local decision-making, while encouraging regional and cross-jurisdictional coordination, communication, and cooperation that increases our capacity to make decisions for the common good across jurisdiction boundaries.

The following Foundational Policies identify the six elements of the Sustainable Thurston plan and articulate what will be done to achieve a more sustainable Thurston Region. This Sustainable Thurston plan is organized using these six elements.

Foundational Policies:

Community

- Build and maintain distinct communities.
- Preserve and enhance the character and identity of existing urban, suburban, and rural communities while offering additional opportunities.
- Add cultural, social, and recreational opportunities in appropriate places and at a scale that supports community health and well-being.
- Support education, employment, and commercial opportunities that support community health and well-being.
- Respond and adapt to future social, economic, and environmental challenges.

Investment

- Maximize the use of existing infrastructure and assets. Leverage the value of these in building vital, healthy, and economically viable communities.

- Make public investments that further multiple community goals, target identified priorities, and leverage additional investment.
- Consider both economies of scale and long-term maintenance cost when investing in infrastructure.
- Provide and maintain municipal services (water, sewer, solid waste, public safety, transportation, and communication networks) in a sustainable and cost-effective manner.
- Champion energy efficiency and renewable energy strategies that contribute to energy independence, economic stability, reduced climate impacts, and long-term household and community health.

Economy

- Create an economy that is diverse, can adapt to changing conditions, takes advantage of new opportunities and supports creativity, arts, and culture.
- Acknowledge and look for opportunities to engage with regional economic drivers such as state government, the Port of Olympia, and Joint Base Lewis-McChord.
- Build a vital economy by offering opportunities for education and entrepreneurial endeavors.
- Provide opportunities for a range of business types to succeed.

- Emphasize policies that support locally owned businesses including home-based, entrepreneurial, and nonprofit business and organizations.
- Nurture urban and rural agricultural and food-oriented businesses. Protect resource lands.
- Connect economic health with personal health and well-being and the advancement of environmental health.
- Add incentives for business to demonstrate their environmental sustainability including reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Opportunities and Choices

- Increase housing and transportation choices to support all ranges of lifestyles, household incomes, abilities, and ages.
- Increase opportunities for riding transit, biking, walking, ridesharing, allowing and encouraging flexible work schedules, and teleworking.
- Encourage development of local services for food, clothing, and other basic human needs.

Natural Environment

- Protect the soil, air, surface water, and groundwater quality through reducing dependence on chemicals and products that pollute and, when their use is necessary, minimizing releases to the environment.
- Ensure adequate clean water is available to support household and commercial needs while sustaining ecological systems through conservation, balancing of uses, and reuse.
- Protect our natural resources and habitat while providing for public access and sustainable uses and economic activity (forests, prairies, wetlands, surface and groundwater resources, and aquatic and terrestrial plants and animals).
- Reduce the effects of the built environment on the natural environment through land-use and transportation plans and actions that encourage compact development, retrofit existing infrastructure to reduce impacts, and reduce energy consumption and reliance on nonrenewable energy sources.
- Acknowledge that changing weather and climate patterns will impact the human, natural, and built environments and plan for impacts such as increased flooding and sea-level rise.

Participation

- Cultivate respectful civic engagement and participation by residents, public, private, and nonprofit businesses and organizations.
- Develop new ways to cultivate and support respectful civic engagement and participation.
- Think broadly, regionally and globally.
- Partner across topic areas and jurisdictional boundaries.
- Break down institutional barriers to communication and cooperation.

Leadership

- Translate vision to policy.
- Act on adopted local plans and policies.
- Consider the effects of decisions on achieving this vision.
- Think regionally — and globally, act locally.
- Balance individual property rights with broader community needs and goals.
- Use meaningful, easy-to-understand methods to measure progress on key objectives.
- Monitor progress and shift course when necessary.

Implementing the Plan: We will implement this regional Plan with each jurisdiction determining what will work best in its unique community. The actions represent a menu of options for local, state, private-sector, and nonprofit partners. Some actions are underway and can be expanded; others will be new for our region. It will take all of the partners — acting locally, collaborating regionally, engaging residents and sustaining efforts over time — to achieve the vision.



Downtown Olympia is the region's cultural heart.

The Thurston Sustainability Wheel

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

