



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thurston County's Ten-Year Destination Master Plan Released

OLYMPIA, Wash. – June 28, 2024 – [Experience Olympia & Beyond](#) is excited to announce the official public release of the Thurston County Ten-Year Destination Master Plan (DMP), a Community-Driven Sustainable Tourism Plan, produced by Convention, Sports & Leisure (CSL) International. The project was undertaken in June of 2023 in response to Thurston County's hospitality and tourism industry which continued to struggle rebounding from the COVID-19 pandemic. Thurston County's need for job creation, economic growth, and resilience in the hospitality and tourism sector was the impetus for the project. The resulting plan provides a multi-faceted blueprint for achieving those initial goals while also providing a glimpse into the wishes and values of Thurston County visitors and locals.

The Thurston County Ten-Year Destination Master Plan was led by a Steering Committee representing jurisdictional and tribal partners within Thurston County, the Thurston County Chamber of Commerce, Thurston Economic Development Council, Port of Olympia, Olympia Downtown Alliance, and private sector representatives:

- Patty Belmonte, CEO, Hands on Children Museum
- David Burnett, Corporate Executive Officer, Island Enterprises, Squaxin Tribe
- Michael Cade, Executive Director, Thurston Economic Development Council
- Todd Cutts, Executive Director, Olympia Downtown Alliance
- Amy Evans Harding, Commissioner, Port of Olympia
- Tony Liberal, Director of Business Development, Medicine Creek Enterprises, Nisqually Tribe
- Jennica Machado, Economic Development Director, Thurston County
- Harry Pickernell, Director of Operations, Chehalis Tribal Enterprises
- Lisa Parks, City Administrator, City of Tumwater
- Mike Reid, Economic Development Director, City of Olympia
- Line Roy, Director of Recreation & Communications, City of Yelm
- David Schaffert, President/CEO, Thurston Chamber of Commerce
- Sarah Schelling, Senior Project Planning Mgr., Community and Economic Development City of Lacey

- George Sharp, Rural Program Manager, Thurston Economic Development Council
Representing Tenino, Bucoda, Grand Mound and Rochester
- Satpal Sohal, Owner, La Quinta Inn & Suites, Tumwater

Four key objectives underpin the plan: enhancing the visitor experience, improving quality of life for Thurston County locals, enriching culture, and stimulating investment. Each of these goals, selected by the project's Steering Committee, not only shaped the trajectory of the DMP's strategy but also promises to deliver multifaceted benefits to the industry, the economy, and the community at large.

The planning process included but was not limited to the following phases:

- Site/stakeholder visits to nearly 50 Thurston County locations.
- One-on-one meetings and industry focus groups representing over 100 conversations.
- Audit of jurisdictional, tribal, economic development, strategic, comprehensive, transportation, and mitigation plans currently in use—over 100 documents reviewed using artificial intelligence to distill commonly held values, issues, opportunities, and challenges.
- Visitor, resident, and stakeholder surveys—nearly 1,000 completed responses.
- Competitive set analyses for similar markets and organizations; aspirational markets and organizations.
- SWOT analyses for destination and organization.
- Evaluation and prioritization of Issues & Opportunities revealed through all processes.
- Identification of potential project champions and supporters.

29 different Issues & Opportunities were revealed throughout the process. The Experience Olympia & Beyond Board of Directors have identified five priority areas that the organization will take a leadership role in implementation starting Q1 in 2025.

Experience Olympia & Beyond's Board President, Sue Falash, explains, "While the planning process was comprehensive, we're excited to tighten our focus and accomplish crucial work that will continue to support community efforts."

Chief Executive Officer, Annette Pitts adds, "This project is about bringing people together, understanding each group's priorities, determining our growth direction, identifying what we should fight to protect, and creating a pathway to quality of life in Thurston County we're all excited to share."

A new Destination Master Plan Taskforce will form in Q1, 2025, and the original DMP Steering Committee members will be invited to participate, and new faces will be welcomed. Information

will be posted on experienceolympia.com when the first DMP Taskforce meeting is scheduled. Individuals interested in joining the Taskforce and/or receiving additional information should contact Emily Lawrence, Director of Marketing & Community Engagement at emily@experienceolympia.com.

Download your copy of the Thurston County Ten-Year Destination Master Plan on [the website](#).

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About Experience Olympia & Beyond

Experience Olympia & Beyond is the official destination marketing organization of Thurston County and Thurston County's Sports Commission. A naturally inspired, approachable destination situated at the foot of Puget Sound, one hour south of Seattle and two hours north of Portland by car, Washington's capital community inspires handcrafted getaways. The region is perfect for hosting meetings, sporting events and weddings. With more than 2,700 lodging rooms throughout Thurston County, there are several options, ranging from unique bed-and-breakfasts to hotels. For more information, visit experienceolympia.com or connect on Facebook, and Instagram (@ExperienceOly).

Media Contact

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