



RETAIL, BUSINESS, COMMUNITY, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

HEALTHY BUSINESSES AND VIBRANT WORK/PLAY ENVIRONMENT

INTRODUCTION

VALUE OF A THRIVING DOWNTOWN BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Downtown Olympia is home to a vibrant business community that attracts activity and investment, and serves as a destination for local and regional residents, as well as tourists. With its concentration of independent shops, restaurants and bars, art galleries and performance venues, a visit to Downtown Olympia offers visitors commercial opportunities along with a unique experience. This is significant, not only to customers, but also to local residents who benefit from the tax revenue generated by Olympia businesses. Moreover, experience-based retail centers are somewhat insulated from the larger market shift towards e-commerce and online retailers.

Although Downtown currently contributes less sales tax revenue-per-acre overall than other commercial areas in Olympia, for certain sectors it captures much more. Downtown



However, some mix of business types and geographic scope can strengthen the overall health of Downtown. Many national retailers have established clienteles that can support other area businesses as well. Such retailers may include coffee shops, grocery stores, drug stores, or restaurants. A strong identity, mix of business sizes and type, and high shopper counts can increase the sales potential of all Downtown businesses.

DISPLACEMENT CONCERNS

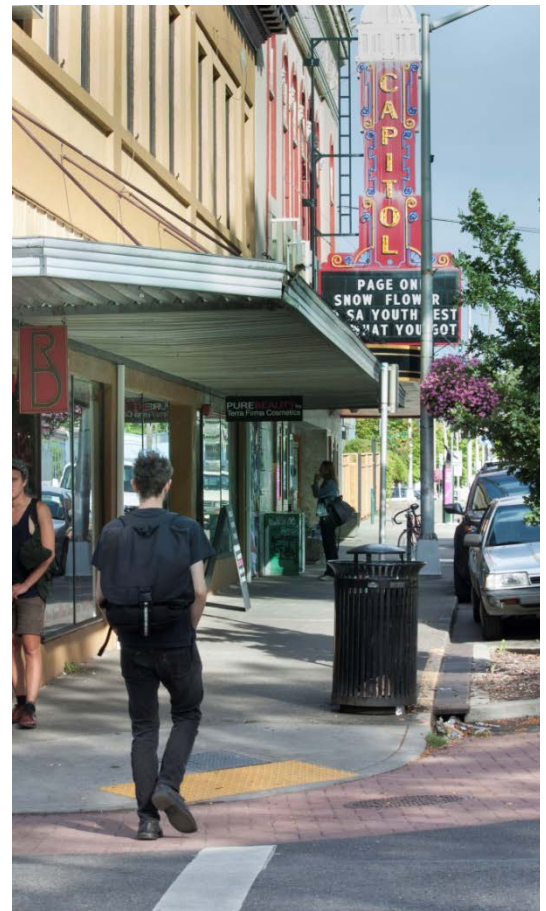
Some established businesses are concerned that new commercial development will capture some of their existing sales, or contribute to higher rents or building replacement that will result in their displacement. The two concerns are related, but distinct. A successful Downtown should attract new spending and potential sales that are at least as great as the sales of new businesses. This growth should support both expansion of existing businesses as well as attraction of new businesses. Further, mixed-use development can increase the supply of commercial space for existing and new businesses and provide some resistance to increased rents. The greatest threat to existing businesses is the demolition or redevelopment of their existing locations. Accordingly, any actions by the city to encourage development of vacant or underdeveloped properties, including conversion of office or warehouse structures, will maximize the net increase of commercial space, and minimize business displacement.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Partnerships are critical to the success of Downtown's business community. The City works closely with organizations, including the Parking and Business Improvement Area (PBIA), Olympia Downtown Association (ODA), the Thurston Economic Development Council (EDC), Thurston County Chamber of Commerce, Visitor and Convention Bureau (VCB), and others. These organizations were directly engaged in the development of the Downtown Strategy and the identification of priorities and actions noted in this chapter.

The City along with its partners have various programs and financial resources available to help create and maintain the economic vibrancy of Downtown businesses, as well as spur new opportunities for both local and outside investment interests.

For more details on business enhancement tools, see the Development Incentives Element and the Tool Box in [Appendix C.1](#).



Improve streetscapes so that Downtown invites more pedestrian activity, patrons and investors

Downtown has a beautiful natural and historic setting that sets it apart from other areas of the county. A well-connected sidewalk network is a strong asset for pedestrians, but the physical and aesthetic quality of Downtown is inconsistent. Aiming to better connect places and spaces through redevelopment, the strategy outlines steps to encourage private sector development and identifies key public investments. Planned street repaving projects on five key streets within the core retail area (Franklin, Jefferson, Legion, Washington and Capitol) presents opportunity to leverage dedicated funds to make transformational streetscape improvements over the next six years. Guided by the character area framework developed through the Downtown Strategy, this ambitious investment should make a big impact in Downtown's retail core, attracting people and investment to the area. (See the Transportation Element and recommended clean and safe efforts listed under R.1 below.)

Encourage more residents so that Downtown offers a more active & urban environment, more patrons and eyes on the street

About 1,800 people currently live Downtown, and the City's Comprehensive Plan sets a target for about 5,000 more over the next 20 years. This target is supported by growing market demand for urban lifestyles where people can work and shop close to home or transit. More people living Downtown means new business opportunities, as foot traffic and residents looking for day-to-day services and goods increase. Having more activity on the street should also contribute to an increased perception of safety, making Downtown more inviting to the broader population. While the City is not itself a housing provider, it currently employs a number of tools to encourage market housing development, including the multifamily tax exemption, lower impact fees, height bonus, and others. (See the Housing and Land Use Elements for a variety of supporting actions.)

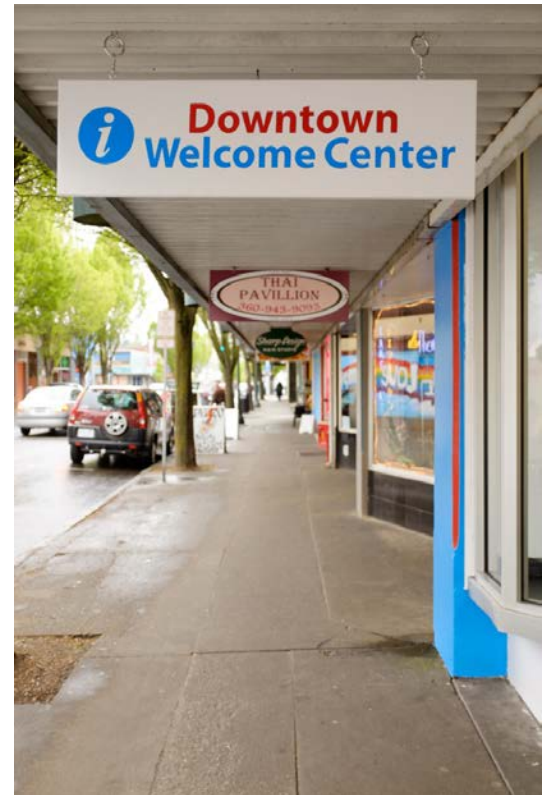


Welcome/Information centers are an important feature of any visitor-centric destination. The City and partners are currently discussing how to improve the Center's location and services. Some ideas include: a more accessible location that is visible to more pedestrians, bicyclists, bus riders, and drivers; historical or environmental education features; public restrooms; souvenirs for purchase; more open hours and well-organized informational materials. Such improvements would be in keeping with the community's vision for Downtown as a welcoming, family-friendly visitor destination.

Connect to other community and economic development efforts so that Downtown is supported by a strong local economy

Many interrelated components contribute to a strong local economy (jobs, education, sector diversity, physical infrastructure, municipal tax revenue, etc.) Through partnerships we can strengthen and connect these components to support the long-term health of our region. The EDC recently lead formation of a Thurston County Economic Alliance that involves many partners including local jurisdictions.

The City's new Economic Development program positions the City to be a strong partner, in turn helping set the stage for the long-term viability of Downtown. A new Community Renewal Area (CRA) will bring new partnership opportunities and catalyst projects. In addition to CRA, the City currently takes advantage of several tools to incentivize development and business. (See R.2H below, the Development Incentives Element, and the Tool Box in [Appendix C.1](#) for more details.)



RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

R.1 Provide a clean and safe Downtown Environment

R.1.A Aim to accomodate a full-time walking patrol

<i>Timeframe</i>	2017: Explore options for funding	Description and intent Many Downtown businesses identified a Downtown walking patrol as an important element of overall clean and safe efforts. The presence of officers contributes to the sense of safety and additional 'eyes on the street,' which can help deter crime. A full-time day and evening walking patrol would add six officers to Downtown throughout the year.
	2018 - Ongoing	
<i>Lead</i>	Olympia Police Department	

R.1.B Coordinate the development of a nightlife/safety plan for the Entertainment Area

<i>Timeframe</i>	2018-2019	Description and intent The Entertainment Area is a current hub of nightlife-focused businesses, but nighttime safety, including transportation for party-goers, poorly lit walking routes and parking lots, are ongoing concerns for both patrons and business owners. A plan for this area could include partnership opportunities to improve late night transportation options such as additional transit service, taxi stands or shuttle service to satellite parking facilities; law enforcement focus; lighting; expanding clean team and Ambassadors, etc. It could also be informed by the nighttime lighting audit (T.8) and involve coordination with the Walking Patrol (R.1.A).
<i>Lead</i>	Community Planning and Development	
<i>Partners and Participants</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Olympia Police Department,• Public Works,• Parks, Art and Recreation Department• Downtown businesses and entertainment venues• InterCity Transit	
		Relationship to other actions T.8 Action that calls for a nighttime lighting audit R.1.A Coordinate with action that calls for the Walking Patrol

* Baseline actions indicate ongoing activities that are part of the City's Economic Development Program.

For all recommended actions, the scope, timeline, and partners/participants are preliminary and will be refined as the City approaches implementation. Many of the actions will include briefings for and sometimes guidance from City advisory boards and neighborhood organizations.

R.1.C Ongoing Clean & Safe efforts in partnership with ODA and PBIA

Description and intent

This action would continue existing Clean & Safe programs and efforts, such as the Downtown Ambassadors, the Clean Team, flower baskets, etc. (For some additional information, see the PBIA's 5-Year Strategic plan.)

Timeframe

Baseline action*

Ongoing

Lead

Community Planning and Development

Partners and Participants

- Olympia Police Department
- Parks, Art and Recreation Department
- Public Works
- Olympia Downtown Association
- Parking and Business Improvement Area

R.1.D Locate public restrooms Downtown

Description and intent

A part of clean and safe efforts, this action helps to reduce impacts to businesses and human waste in public spaces, which has been a ongoing concern. In Fall 2016, the City Council voted to move forward with siting a 24-hour permanent restroom at the Artesian Commons. 24-hour temporary restrooms (e.g. portable toilets) are planned to be located at three other locations in the Downtown.

Design for permanent restrooms is funded for 2017. Currently unfunded is construction of a permanent restroom and new locations and maintenance for temporary restrooms.

Timeframe

Baseline action

2016-2018: Siting of permanent restroom

Ongoing: Maintenance

Lead

Community Planning and Development

Partners and Participants

Parks, Art and Recreation Department

R.1.E Artesian commons programming, Park Rangers, and Artesian Leadership Committee and Action Teams

Timeframe

Baseline action

Ongoing

Lead

Parks Art and Recreation Department

Partners and Participants

- Artesian Leadership Committee
- Community Youth Services
- Community Planning and Development
- Olympia Police Department

Description and intent

The City has partnered with many local businesses and non-profits to bring positive, daily programming and events to the space. Improvements to the site are ongoing, with the ultimate goal of creating a space that is safe and welcoming for all. The recent addition of Park Rangers provides more oversight and has helped reduce complaints about behaviors that make people feel unsafe.

R.1.F Assess outcome of shared trash compactor pilot, and continue the program if it is successful

Timeframe

2016-2017

Lead

Public Works

Partners and Participants

Downtown businesses

Description and intent

This program reduces the number of garbage cans in the alleys and frequency of garbage truck trips by providing a trash compactor for multiple businesses to share. The first pilot went in near Big Whiskey Saloon earlier in 2016. The City is working closely with businesses to assess and deploy this program.

R.2 Strengthen business community

R.2.A Develop and maintain a business support webpage

Description and intent

This action will provide a City-hosted business support website, to make it easier for businesses to find information about licensing, allowed uses, permit info, etc.

Timeframe

Baseline action

2016 - Ongoing

Lead

Community Planning and Development

Partners and Participants

Communications Services

R.2.B Conduct a business retention survey with local retail business owners

Description and intent

A business retention survey would provide the City with useful information about why Downtown businesses close. This would provide a step towards understanding how City and partners can help to promote business success.

Timeframe

2018-2019: Develop and conduct survey

Ongoing: Periodic surveys

Lead

Community Planning and Development

Partners and Participants

Olympia Downtown Association

R.2.C Improve upon existing permit assistance at the front counter by developing information and materials to help small business owners with opening a storefront

Description and intent

This relates primarily to opening a storefront in an existing building, which may require upgrades per the building code or design guidelines, as well as sign permits, etc. It has been suggested that providing information about common change of use requirements and their purpose would be helpful. (Note: The State provides assistance with business license applications. Also, the ODA provides a welcome packet to new Downtown businesses.)

Timeframe

Baseline action

2018/19-Ongoing

Lead

Community Planning and Development

Partners and Participants

Olympia Downtown Association

R.2.D Invite guest speakers to Downtown business groups to share information on financial and technical resources and offer workshop training on best practices for local retailers (merchandising, understanding consumer options, online vs. brick & mortar marketing, etc.)

<i>Timeframe</i>	Description and intent
Baseline action 2016-Ongoing	Although there are many business support services available in Thurston County, not all Downtown business owners are aware of these. Downtown business groups like the PBIA and ODA can help spread the word.
<i>Lead</i>	The City has initiated this action, and would like to work with business groups like the PBIA, ODA and the Chamber to identify what types of training would be most helpful and help to sponsor the training.
Community Planning and Development	
<i>Partners and Participants</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thurston Economic Development Council• Commercial brokers• Financial service providers• Parking and Business Improvement Area• Olympia Downtown Association• Thurston Chamber of Commerce	

R.2.E Promote and provide assistance with available development tools

Description and intent

While the City and partners currently make available several business assistance tools, we've learned that businesses are not always aware of these. An important first step is to develop materials to help explain and promote these tools. From there, we can conduct ongoing outreach to promote these tools and connect businesses to City staff or outside organizations that can assist with their use. In particular, the business community expressed interest in receiving assistance with the following development tools:

- Adaptive reuse of existing structures as a way to maintain existing retail spaces, which are typically less costly to lease/own than new
- Financial incentives for historic buildings
- Connecting to local financial institutions who are interested in lending for DT redevelopment projects (e.g., Thurston First Bank)

Key relationships to other actions

**LU.5,
LU.6
and
D.6** Actions that call for further exploration and promotion of tools and financial opportunities related to adaptive reuse and historic structures.

**R.2.A,
R.2.C,
R.2.D
and
R.2.F** Actions that provide an outlet for communicating the availability of these tools

Timeframe

Baseline action

2017: Develop materials

Ongoing

Lead

Community Planning and Development

Partners and Participants

- Olympia Master Builders
- Thurston Chamber of Commerce
- Olympia Downtown Association
- Thurston Economic Development Council

R.2.F Develop a media plan to regularly communicate about Downtown improvements & use data to tell a different story about Downtown

<i>Timeframe</i>	Description and intent Regularly share positive information and data about Downtown. Address perception vs. reality (e.g. provide stats that demonstrate crime is actually relatively low in Downtown.) Make sure Downtown business owners receive this data so they can share it to help change perceptions.
Baseline action	
2017-Ongoing	
<i>Lead</i>	
Community Planning and Development	
<i>Partners and Participants</i>	
Help with outreach:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking and Business Improvement Area • Olympia Downtown Association • Media 	
Other City departments to share information.	

R.2.G Initiate partners to work with the State on a marketing strategy to encourage state workers to come Downtown

<i>Timeframe</i>	Description and intent About 6,000 employees work on the Capitol Campus. We understand many of these employees do not venture into Downtown before, during or after work – a lost opportunity. The proposal is to encourage campus workers to come Downtown and experience all it has to offer. Could include: advertising through crafted messages, flyers, posters, displays; presentations, promotions, etc.
2017: Engage partners, and encourage them to take lead	
<i>Lead</i>	
Community Planning and Development	
<i>Partners and Participants</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor and Convention Bureau • Olympia Downtown Association • State Department of Enterprise Services (DES) 	
	Key relationships to other actions
	R.4.C State workers and/or Downtown lunch, dinner and happy hour locations could be a focus of branding and marketing efforts associated with this action.
	R.4.E Consider State workers as part of steps to develop and promote arts, culture and heritage events in the Downtown
	R.4.F The Music Out Loud program is another way to invite State workers into Downtown.

R.2.H Maintain City-driven Economic Development Program (Economic Development Director & Downtown Liaison)

Description and intent

Ongoing program includes:

- Continue dedicating City staff to staying in communication with Downtown businesses, supporting the PBIA and carrying out a variety of key projects to advance the prosperity of Downtown
- Work with EDC and other partners to implement steps outlined in the Thurston Regional Economic Development Plan
- Develop strong public/private partnerships so that investment is captured and stewarded to support Downtown businesses (i.e., InterCity Transit, CRA, parking solutions.)
- Support Community Renewal Area (CRA) plan for Downtown
- Complete public/private partnerships to redevelop Water Street area and former Griswold property
- Regular coordination with headquarter employers to actively support business & employee retention (i.e., Heritage Bank, Olympia Federal, Image Source, Mud Bay, WA Business Bank, WSECU and WA State, etc.)
- Identifying businesses within the region that are looking to expand or open a storefront
- Market Downtown to a variety of employers that may include the technology, finance, professional services, non-profit sectors
- Partnering with EDC in regional tech sector group to support employee recruitment & tech/innovation culture
- Partnering with the Thurston County Chamber and PAC Mtn. Workforce Development Council to connect employers to workforce talent
- Through regular dialogue with partners seek to understand new & emerging trends for development, partnerships and financing
- Coordinate efforts with ODA to identify and address business retention red flags.

Timeframe

Baseline action

Ongoing

Lead

Community Planning and Development

Partners and Participants

- Thurston Economic Development Council
- Parking and Business Improvement Area
- Olympia Downtown Association
- Thurston Chamber of Commerce
- Port
- Pacific Mountain Workforce Development
- Employers
- Other regional jurisdictions

R.2.I Provide support to carry out the PBIA's 5-year Strategic Plan

<i>Timeframe</i>	Description and intent
Baseline action	Numerous actions are listed within the Parking & Business Improvement Area (PBIA) strategic plan (on the City's website.)
Ongoing	
<i>Lead</i>	
Community Planning and Development	
<i>Partners and Participants</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public Works• Parks, Art and Recreation Department• Olympia Police Department	

R.2.J Consider expanding the Parking & Business Improvement Area (PBIA) Boundary

<i>Timeframe</i>	Description and intent
2019	The designated Parking & Business Improvement Area (PBIA) assesses a fee on business owners that is used to improve the business and parking environment within the designated boundary. The PBIA Board is interested in exploring whether potential changes to the boundary would benefit Downtown.
<i>Lead</i>	
Community Planning and Development	
<i>Partners and Participants</i>	
Parking and Business Improvement Area	

R.2.K Funding the Grow Olympia Fund (helps existing businesses grow) and contributing funds for the regional Tune-Up Program (helps stabilize existing businesses)

<i>Timeframe</i>	Description and intent
Baseline action	The City uses eligible Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to support these programs. The first business to use the Grow Olympia Fund was Oly Roasters, who received a low interest loan to expand their storefront on 4th Ave. The Tune-Up Program recently received 17 applications from small, local businesses.
Ongoing	
<i>Lead</i>	
City	
<i>Partners and Participants</i>	
Thurston Economic Development Council	

R.3 Help ensure adequate space for a spectrum of businesses

R.3.A Help connect businesses (new or existing) to available properties through real estate listings, local commercial brokers and property owners. Help connect businesses looking for real estate options or shared spaces with each other and available resources

Description and intent

Helping businesses connect to available, appropriate and affordable business space was identified as a need during the DTS public process. Specific interest was expressed in small spaces for startups, larger spaces for expansions and co-op or condo options. The City won't drive a shared space market, but we can match make. A first step would be for City to better understand what support services or programs there are so we can help make connections.

Timeframe

Baseline action

Ongoing

Lead

Community Planning and Development

Partners and Participants

- Property owners
- Real estate community
- Commercial land trust

R.4 Promote Tourism

R.4.A Work with partners to leverage Thurston County's designation as an Innovation Partnership Zone for brewing and distilling to advance Art/Tech and Entertainment areas

Timeframe

Baseline action

2017-Ongoing

Lead

Community Planning and Development

Partners and Participants

- Thurston Economic Development Council
- Regional municipalities
- South Puget Sound Community College
- Washington State University Extension
- Visitor and Convention Bureau

Description and intent

In 2015, the State Department of Commerce designated Thurston County as a "Craft Brewing and Distilling Innovation Partnership Zone." Building this industry presents great tourism and employment opportunities in the region. The stated mission is to "ensure a world-class source for craft brewed beers and ciders and craft distilled spirits which are made from locally grown ingredients by independent expert producers and distributed nationally and internationally to great acclaim."

R.4.B Look into how signage along I-5 can be improved

Timeframe

2018-2019

Lead

Community Planning and Development

Partners and Participants

WA Department of Transportation

Description and intent

Improve signage about historic district, waterfront and other amenities to draw visitors to Downtown.

Key relationships to other actions

D.4. Coordinate with the upcoming Art and Wayfinding plan

R.4.C Support branding/marketing efforts in partnership with the Visitors & Convention Bureau, Olympia Downtown Association, Parking and Business Improvement Area and others

Description and intent

Include representatives from major Downtown attractions in forming the marketing strategy (HOCCM, LOTT Wet Center, South Sound Estuarium, Farmers Market, Capitol Campus, theaters, etc.) In addition, take this opportunity to strengthen the City's relationship with the Visitor and Convention Center (VCB) through consistent information sharing, etc. Consider new events and promote a cohesive event cycle.

The City sees itself as an important partner in this effort, but not necessarily the lead.

Key relationships to other actions

D.4. Coordinate branding with the upcoming Art and Wayfinding plan

R.2.G Could be used to make State workers better aware of food and shopping opportunities in Downtown.

R.4. Coordinate with efforts to promote tourism

Timeframe

Baseline action

2017: Engage partners, and encourage them to take lead

Ongoing: Support would be ongoing.

Partners and Participants

- Visitor and Convention Bureau
- Olympia Downtown Association
- Parking and Business Improvement Area
- City

R.4.D Support existing Downtown assets, and provide support for investment interest for additional attractions, including a college presence and a full-service hotel

Description and intent

Downtown currently has great visitor attractions, but there is room for more. The market study completed as part of the DTS identified the importance of including at least one full service hotel as part of the overall number of supportable new hotel rooms within the next 20 years. This is in order to diversify the market segmentation and reinforce Downtown as the center of the local lodging and entertainment sector.

Timeframe

Baseline action

Ongoing

Lead

Community Planning and Development

Partners and Participants

- Real estate community
- Thurston Economic Development Council

R.4.E Identify steps to develop and promote arts, culture and heritage activities, particularly in the Art/Tech and Entertainment areas

<i>Timeframe</i>	Description and intent
2018-2019	This action could include pursuing legislative action to create funding and other programmatic resources.
<i>Lead</i>	Key relationships to other actions
Parks, Art and Recreation Department	D.4 Coordinate with art and wayfinding plan.
<i>Partners and Participants</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Olympia Police Department • Community Planning and Development • Public Works • Arts Commission 	

R.4.F Continue to support events by providing logistical support and implement the Music Out Loud Program. Work with marketing partners as part of R.4.C and R.2.G to consider new events and promote a cohesive event cycle

<i>Timeframe</i>	Description and intent
Baseline action	Examples include Arts Walk, Procession of the Species, Lakefair, etc. City could also consider alternating locations for Arts Walk so that different businesses can participate.
Ongoing	
<i>Lead</i>	Developing a Music Out Loud program is currently underway. This is a program of musical performances occurring in locations where pivotal past musicians are honored on sidewalk mosaics (creating the mosaics is part of the effort.)
Various	
<i>Partners and Participants</i>	We will continue to look for opportunities to fulfill this public priority.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Olympia Police Department • Community Planning and Development • Public Works 	Key relationships to other actions
	R.2.G The Music Out Loud program can provide opportunity to draw State workers to Downtown.
	R.4.C Coordinate with marketing and branding opportunities.