

Gophers, Trees, and Affordable Housing

A *[mostly happy]* STORY OF BALANCING PRIORITIES IN TUMWATER...

September 2022



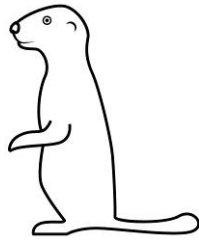
Our Story So Far...

There once was a small city of about 26,360 people *[OFM 2022 Estimate, 4/1/22, subject to adjustments to reflect 7/18/22 US Census CQR revision]* that stretched from the south shore of Capital Lake *[Subject to outcome of the Capitol Lake – Deschutes Estuary Process, Estuary Alternative likely preferred alternative, Draft EIS 6/30/21]* in the north, the Deschutes River *[SMA Shoreline of the State, SMP Update adopted 12/3/19]* in the east, almost to Black Lake *[Subject to the Tumwater-Thurston County Joint Plan, update adopted 11/30/21]* in the west, and Bush Prairie *[Primarily under Port of Olympia ownership, subject to FAA deed restrictions on residential uses]* to the south...



Our Story Continues...

...this small city was similar to others of its size, but was unique in a special way, as **gophers**, **trees**, and **affordable housing** all wanted to call Tumwater home and the City supported their goals...



And that was problematic.



The Dilemma

- **Gophers** did not live in **trees** and did not like the development of **affordable housing** *[They were also asocial animals, meaning they didn't even like other gophers, but that is another story...]*
- **Trees** and **gophers** did not mix and people did not want to cut down trees for **affordable housing**
- **Affordable housing** was more difficult and expensive to build when protecting **gophers** and **trees**



The Solution

Gophers living in affordable tree houses!

Okay, that wasn't the real solution. This is what actually happened...



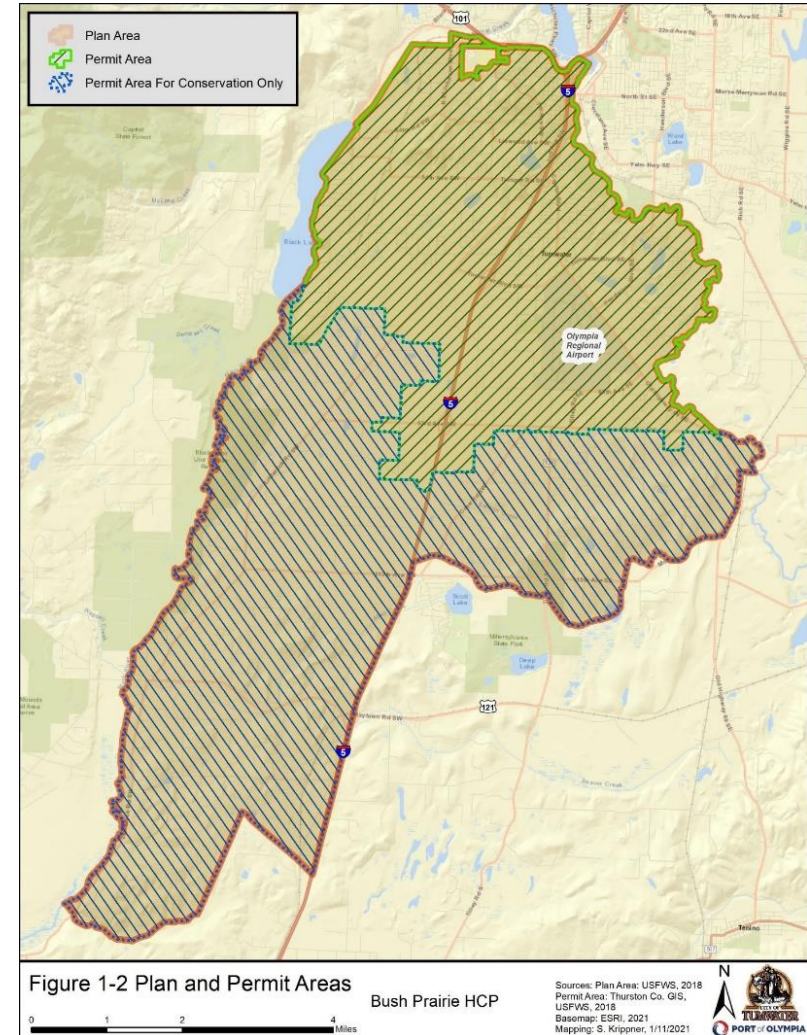
Character #1 – Gophers:



- The Olympia subspecies of the Mazama **gopher** calls the southern two thirds of Tumwater and a similarly sized area to the south in the County home...



- This native prairie was easy to develop
- Then the federal government listed the **gopher** as threatened under the ESA



Habitat Conservation Plan

- Tumwater and the Port of Olympia started working with USFWS on a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) in 2016
- The HCP covers the **gopher** and three other species in the City:



- The HCP will:
 - Allow for higher quality and more efficient long-term species protection
 - Reduce uncertainty, costs, and delays for new development and redevelopment envisioned by the City and Port
 - Allow continued and ongoing maintenance of City and Port facilities

Habitat Conservation Plan - Status

- Still working on an HCP with USFWS
- Final public draft should be issued soon and then environmental review will start

Expected Result: Better long term future for **gopher** survival in support of the federal **gopher** recovery plan and more urban land available for **affordable housing**

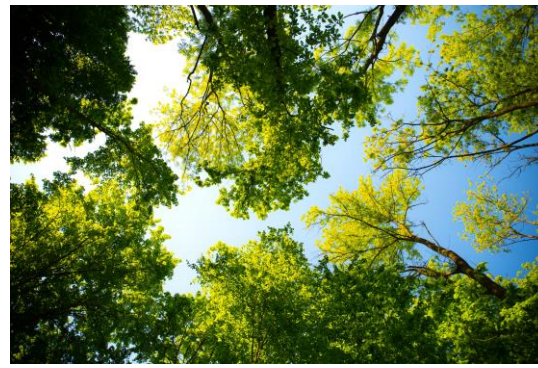
Still working on how it will benefit the **trees...**



Character #2 – Trees:



- People in Tumwater like trees



- Really like trees...



Tree Plans and Actions

- Urban Forestry Management Plan (UFMP) (2021)
- Thurston Climate Action Plan (TCMP) (2021)
- Actions to support the goals of the UFMP and TCMP:
 - “The Right **T**ree in the Right Place”
 - Urban canopy coverage goals in the City
 - Protecting **t**rees and forests in the rural areas
- Updates to the following:
 - **T**ree and vegetation retention regulations (2022-23)
 - Street **T**ree Plan (2021-23)
 - Landscaping regulations (2022-23)



Tree Related Actions

Expected Result: A healthy urban forest and **trees** grown within the City providing many environmental, economic, and community benefits

UFMP explicitly balances the protection of the urban forest with other City strategic priorities, which include **affordable housing**, developing a walkable, urban community, economic development, and protecting endangered species, such as the **gopher**



Character #3 – Affordable Housing:

In 2018, the Mayor and the City Council directed staff to undertake a number of actions to address **affordable housing** and homelessness:

➤ **Affordable Housing**

- “Don’t call it ‘missing middle’” code changes
- Fee reductions
- Mobile home park and tenant protections

➤ **Homelessness**

- Working with the Tumwater School District and non-profits to house homeless students and families
- Committing resources through the Regional Housing Council



Housing Action Plan

- Tumwater Housing Action Plan (Actions 2021 –)
 - Began as a collaborative effort between the Cities of Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater
 - The City Council adopted the City’s Housing Action Plan in 2021 to reflect the specific conditions and concerns of the City
- Comprehensive Plan Housing Element Update (2022 – 25)

City of Tumwater

HOUSING ACTION PLAN



Affordable Housing Related Actions

Expected Result: Work will inform further updates to the City's Comprehensive Plan policies and development regulations and guide implementation strategies to help the City meet its **affordable housing** needs and strategic objectives

Still working on how it will benefit the **gopher** and **trees**

We have not given up on the **gopher tree** house idea...



The Moral of Our Story...

Gophers, Trees, and Affordable Housing...



As much as possible, strive for balance, balance, and balance

[Subject to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 10(a)(1)(B), TMC 16.08 Protection of Trees and Vegetation, and the provisions of RCW 35.21.500 Compilation, codification, revision of city or town ordinances—Scope of codification through RCW 35.21.570 Compilation, codification, revision of city or town ordinances—Codification satisfies single subject, title, and amendment requirements of statute or charter]



Thank you!

Are there any questions?

