

About POG



Let us know what you think!

Thurston County Priorities of Government Project

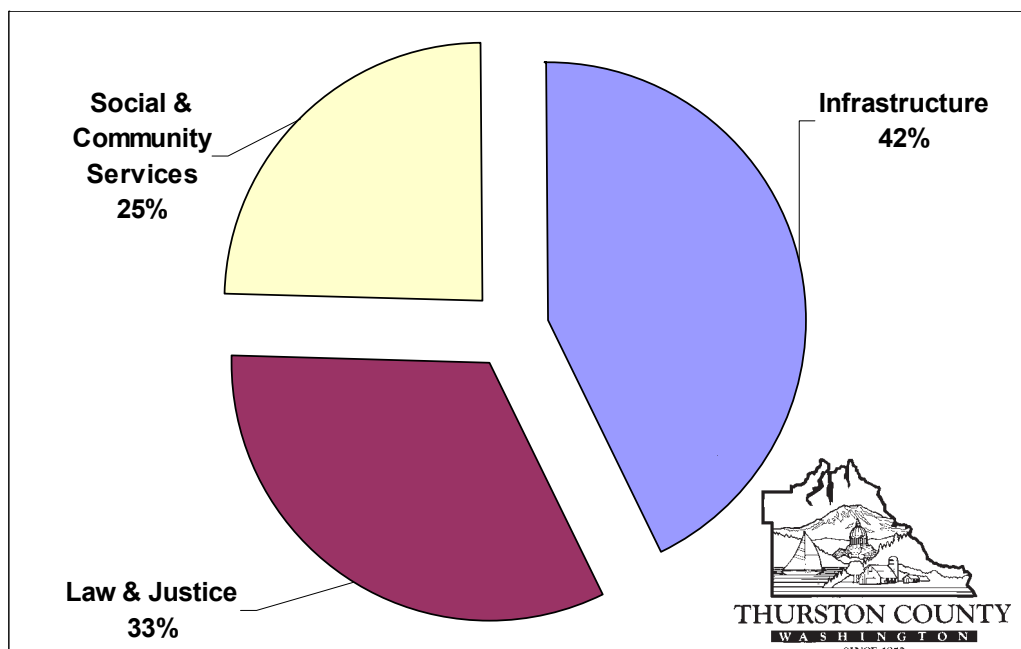
County Budget Challenges

Every year, without fail, Thurston County is required to adopt a balanced budget to fund the activities of county government. The budget defines how much money is spent and where it goes; in effect, the budget is the engine that drives county programs and services for our community.

Budget decisions involve difficult choices because there are limited dollars to spend. Here in Thurston County, revenues are not keeping up with the cost of services. Simply stated, county government faces a budget shortfall that could reduce some services to residents. That's why it's essential for the county to have a sense of the public's priorities.

Most of the county budget comes from fees, dedicated taxes, state grants and federal grants, which must be used for specific purposes. Therefore, county commissioners are limited in changes they can make in the county budget. Commissioners can, however, shift or refocus some general tax revenues to address citizens' priorities.

For this project, the services provided by Thurston County have been grouped into three broad categories, shown on this graph.



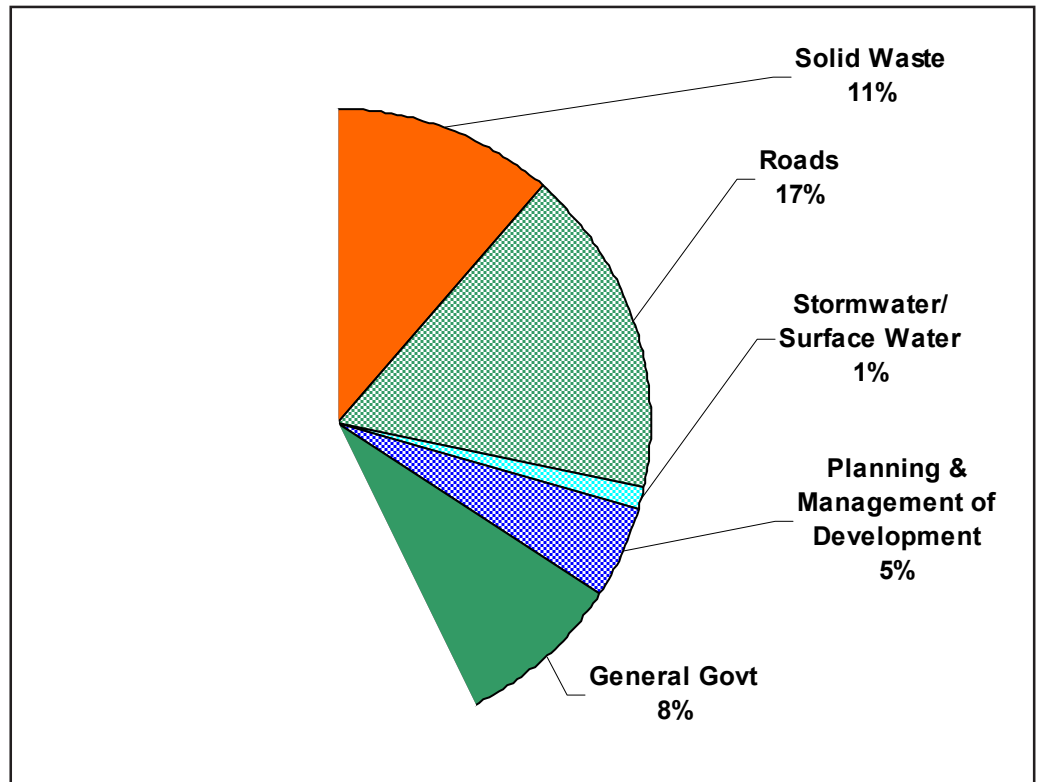
Thurston County government is undertaking a project to help prioritize public services for the coming years. Through the "Priorities for Government" project (POG), we hope to better understand which programs and services county residents most want their county government to concentrate on in the future.

Please take a moment to read this summary of the county budget. Washington State University pollsters might call you to seek your views on county services. Also, Thurston County is hosting three workshops in June to hear residents' opinions, and to validate the results of the telephone poll. You are among 2,400 residents selected to receive these materials.



42% Infrastructure

Infrastructure comprises approximately 42 percent of the county's public services budget. The principal sources of funding are fees and grants, plus portions of the property and sales taxes that are by law dedicated to roads.

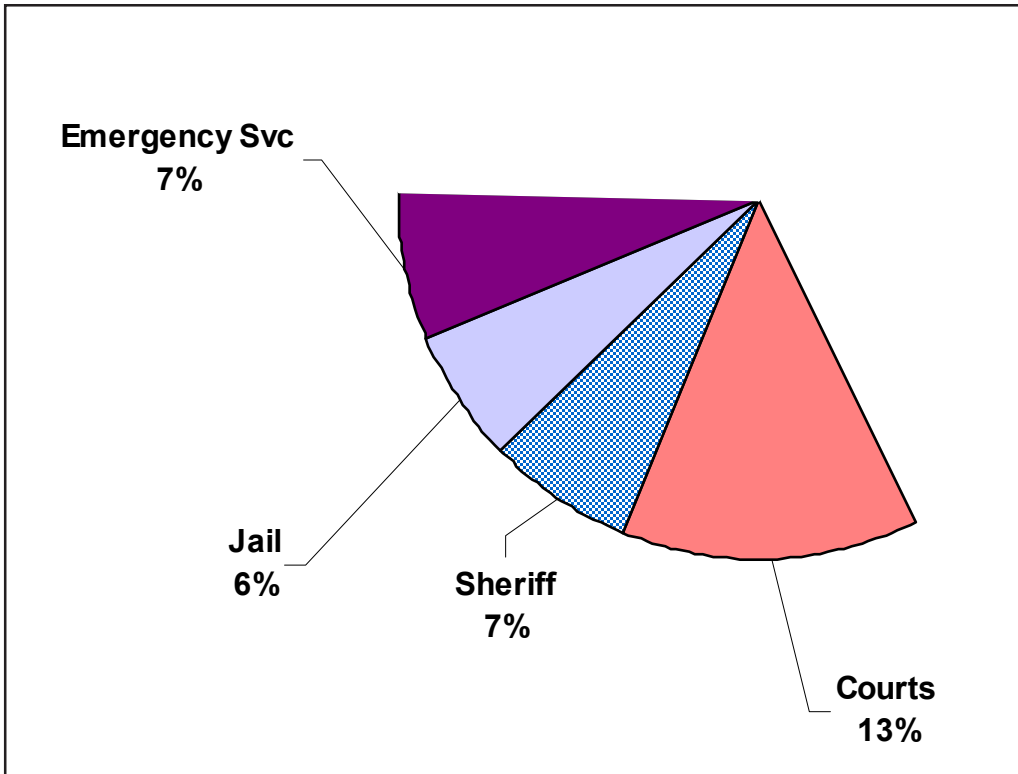


Graph Key

- Solid waste management includes operation of the county Waste and Recovery Center and recycling. (The Waste and Recovery Center was formerly known as the Hawks Prairie Landfill.)
- Roads are constructed and maintained outside of towns and cities.
- Stormwater/surface water includes both the quality of surface streams and lakes, and management of stormwater flows and mitigation measures.
- Planning and management of development includes permits, zoning, resource protection, and noxious weed control.
- General government services includes elections, government audits, property assessments, vehicle and marriage licenses, official records, and the other duties of the auditor, assessor, commissioners, and treasurer.

Law and Justice

This category of services accounts for 33 percent of the county's public services budget. Principal funding sources are general taxes, fees and dedicated taxes for emergency services.

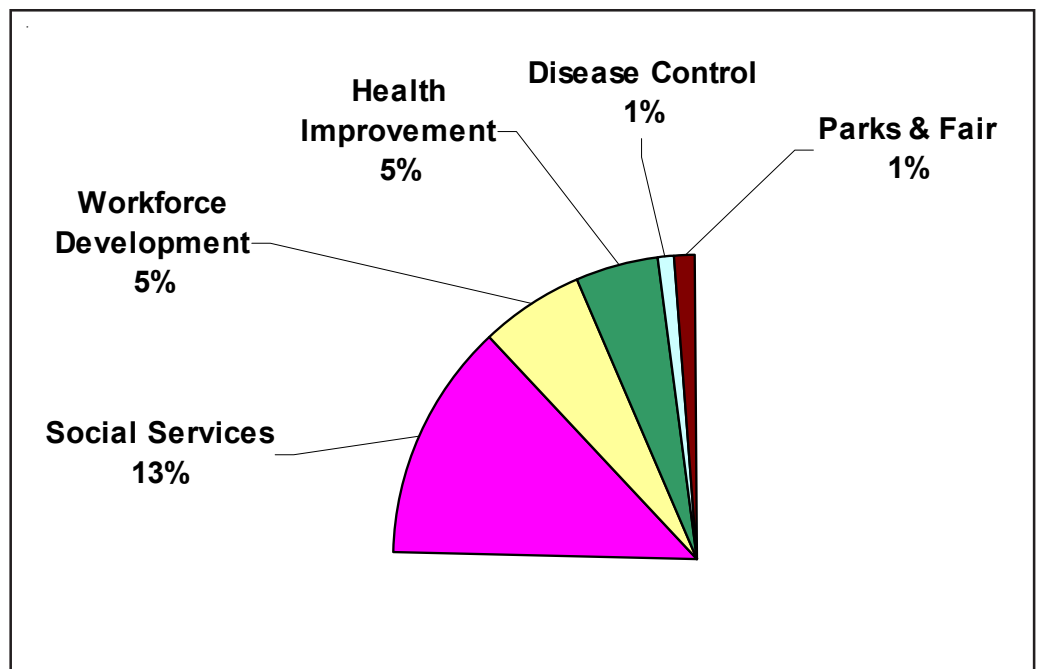


Graph Key

- Emergency services includes 911 phone service, Medic One, and emergency management planning.
- County jail operations include incarceration alternatives and probation services.
- Sheriff provides general law enforcement outside of towns and cities.
- Courts includes criminal, civil, juvenile and family courts. This category also includes public defenders, and elected officials such as the county prosecutor, coroner, clerks and judges.

25% Social and Community Services

This category of services accounts for approximately 25 percent of the county's public services budget. Most of the funds for this category come from federal and state grants dedicated to specific purposes.



Graph Key

- County parks and fair includes parks like Burfoot and Kenneydell and recreational programs run by county parks staff.
- Disease prevention programs by the county Public Health Department involve monitoring for infectious diseases and environmental health risks, such as drinking water contamination.
- Health improvement programs by the county Public Health Department are targeted to reach at-risk populations (such as pregnant women) with health information, screening and assistance.
- Workforce training programs to improve the skills and employment of county residents are conducted through the local Workforce Development Consortium.
- The social services provided by the county are primarily community mental health outpatient and crisis services. There are also some services for substance abuse treatment, for developmental disabilities and veterans.

What Thurston County *Must* Provide

By state law, Thurston County government is the main provider of many local services. County government’s responsibility for providing these services depends on the geographic area of the county. About one-half of the citizens of Thurston County live inside towns and cities and about one-half live in the unincorporated areas outside those boundaries.

	Throughout the county:	Outside of towns and cities:
Required by state law	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Courts-Elections-Jails and probation-Mental health services-Disease prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Roads-Law enforcement-Planning-Surface water management*
Other services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Parks-Workforce development-Solid waste management-Emergency services	

What the County Does NOT Provide

County government does not provide public schools, colleges, foster care, welfare, fire departments, freeways, or city streets.

Other Local Governments

In addition to the county government, there are other local governments and agencies in Thurston County including cities, towns, the Port of Olympia, school districts and fire districts. Each of these taxing districts provides a different set of services.



* “Surface water” refers to water that is visible from the surface of the land, such as lakes, rivers, and Puget Sound.

Limited Flexibility

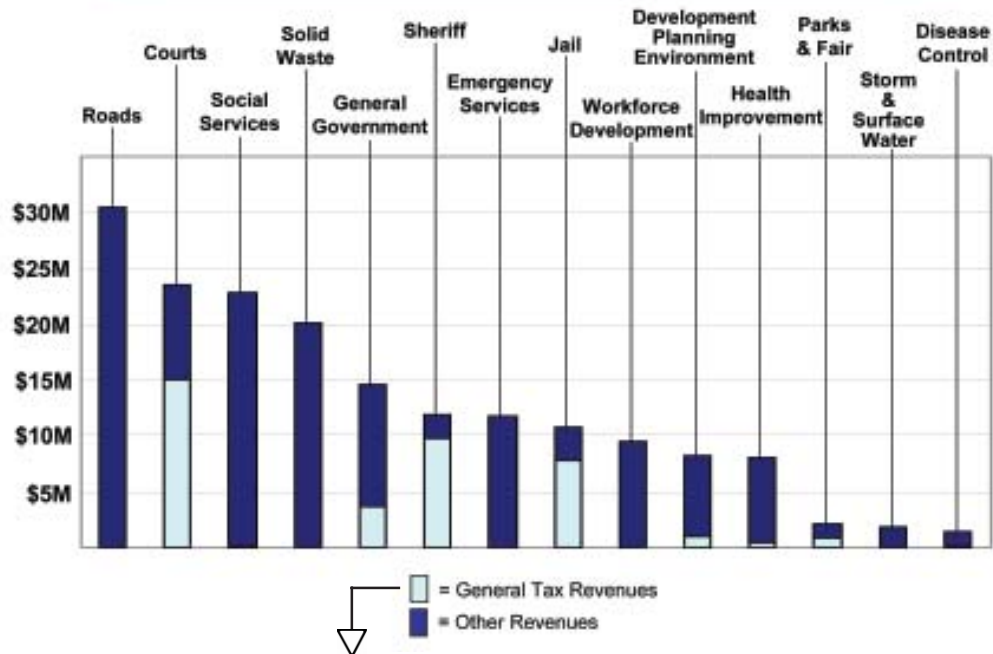
Most of the county's \$177 million public services budget is financed by fees, dedicated taxes, state grants, and federal grants, which must be used for specific purposes. Flexibility in changing the county budget is limited because,

- ✓ state laws require the county to perform many specific functions, and
- ✓ most county funding is dedicated for specific purposes.

As a result, the county's unrestricted monies, the "general tax revenues," are not spread evenly, but are used to support services with less dedicated funding.



Distribution of Revenues



Expenditure of General Taxes	
Courts	\$15.0m
Sheriff	\$9.7m
Jail	\$7.8m
General Government	\$3.7m
Development, Planning, Environment	\$1.0m
Parks and Fair	\$0.8m
Health Improvement	\$0.5m
Disease Control	\$0.2m
Social Services	\$0.1m
Total	\$38.8m

Where Does General Tax Revenue Come From?

The two major sources of nondedicated funds are the county's share of property taxes and sales taxes. These are the funds over which the county has the most control - however, they are less than a quarter of the total county budget.

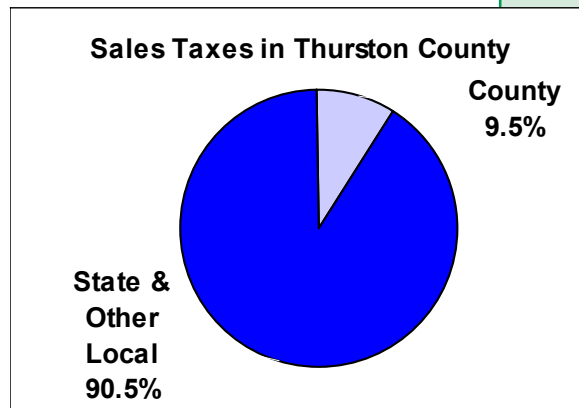
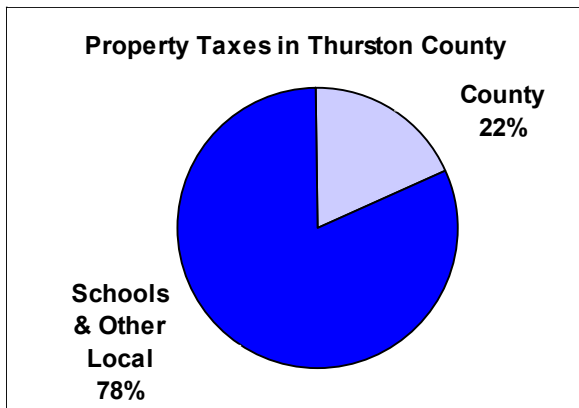
Flash Facts:

When you pay your property tax bill, your funds go to Thurston County. That's because the state requires a one-stop shop for paying property taxes. Thurston County consolidates information from all local governments, such as school districts, cities, fire districts and the Port of Olympia.

The county then prepares tax statements, collects property taxes and disburses them to the appropriate local government. Most of the funds county government collects are passed to the governmental bodies that levied them.

√ Of every \$1 in property taxes collected in Thurston County, 22 cents goes to county government.

√ Of every \$1 in sales tax collected in Thurston County, 9.5 cents goes to county government.



- **Property taxes:** County government receives 22 percent of the total property tax revenues. About 45 percent of the county's share is dedicated by law to roads and Medic One. Of the other 78 percent, K-12 public schools receive 57 percent, fire districts 6 percent and cities 10 percent. The port, library and other smaller jurisdictions also receive property taxes.
- **Sales taxes:** County government receives 9.5 percent of sales taxes collected in Thurston County. State government receives 73 percent of sales tax revenues, with the remainder going to cities and Intercity Transit.

What's Left Out of This Description

- The county budget is quite complex. This overview excludes the county's budget for capital facilities (such as buildings and equipment), internal services and debt service.
- Several small programs are not shown on these pages. These include the WSU Thurston County Extension, Animal Control, veterans' assistance, and support of community organizations. Each constitutes less than 1/2 percent of the county budget. Visit www.co.thurston.wa.us for details.

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