



Downtown Strategy (DTS) 2/20/16 Public Workshop

Questions posed by public for staff/MAKERS (from index cards)

1. Will you meet with Olympia Arts Commission regarding their “Gateways” planning?

We are tracking the Arts Commission’s gateway planning effort. Based on January 29 direction from the Council’s General Government Committee, the gateway locations the Commission will be planning for are not located within the Downtown Strategy (DTS) planning area. That said, replacing the entrance sign into downtown that is located at Plum and Union will be reflected in the DTS draft as a potential action to be prioritized among other potential actions.

2. How to help finance “artisans district”? How to work with State Legislators and WA Arts Commission on definition of this?

In general, the “artisans/tech” district would be financed through a mix of public and private investment. The City may invest in streetscape or other improvements (often funded through state and federal grants in addition to the City’s capital or operating budget.) Private (re)development would happen over time with willing property owners and interested businesses (e.g., the recent Olympia Roasters expansion and renovation of the Thurston First Bank building.)

Another approach is to develop a downtown Local Improvement District (LID) for this purpose. It would require 60 percent support from property owners to voluntarily tax themselves, and there may be other competing priorities. Other possible sources of ongoing support could be a small admission tax on events, or use of lodging tax funds. Special types of funding may also be available for artist or subsidized housing. During the June-August timeframe, the DTS team will be taking a closer look at the tools available to help implement the guiding framework for the DTS.

The Washington State legislature recently passed HB2583 which authorizes specified local governments to designate a portion of their territory as a creative district subject to certification by the Washington arts commission. “Creative districts” contain a hub of cultural facilities, creative industries, or arts-related businesses and must be:

- Contiguous;
- Distinguished by artistic and cultural resources involving economic and cultural development; and
- Engaged and contributing to the community arts and culture; and
- Additional criteria at the discretion of the WA arts commission.

It is not clear what, if any, implementation tools would be made available by the State to implement a designated “creative district.”

The “artisans/tech” and “entertainment” districts outlined in the DTS draft guiding framework is similar in concept to the “creative district” defined by HB 2583. The DTS team will work with the City’s Arts Commission (tasked with defining a “creative district”) to bring the concepts into alignment and determine next steps and available resources.



3. Can we move the Japanese Garden to the core? It is a wasted resource where it is!

The [Yashiro Japanese Garden](#), located at 1010 Plum St SE just south of the Lee Creighton Justice Center, was dedicated to the City in 1990. At this time there are no plans to move the park.

4. If the isthmus Master Plan is not going to be part of the downtown plan, will the City work to have a similar public input process and how does it affect the CRA?

A master plan for the isthmus will be reflected in the draft DTS as a potential action to be prioritized among other actions. If the City completes a master plan for the isthmus in the future this would definitely include a public process. There is a possibility the City could use the [Community Renewal Area \(CRA\) tool](#) to help redevelop public property on the isthmus, and that could be determined as part of the master plan effort.

Earlier this year, the City Council selected Urban Olympia LLC as a preferred development partner to develop a proposal for a possible Water Street Redevelopment Project as part of the City's CRA (area outlined below.) Such a project would provide a well-designed connection from the downtown core to the isthmus. The DTS team is in communication with Urban Olympia LLC to ensure alignment as these efforts both move forward in 2016.



5. How will the City promote the next public event to encourage communities of color to participate in this process? Thurston Black Alliance/Risen Faith/Muslim Community of Olympia/Evergreen Longhouse

We are reaching out to various groups this month to offer information about the DTS and, if desired, for a City planner to present to groups. All of the above are on our list. If you are affiliated with any groups that would like staff to attend an upcoming meeting to discuss downtown issues, please contact us at dts@ci.olympia.wa.us.

6. What if we see something regarding the "proposals" that we believe are not yet ideal? i.e. – Connections that should be included that currently are not.

Hopefully you provided your ideas at the 2/20 workshop. Groups were encouraged to add comments to their worksheets to give us exactly this type of feedback. The team is collating these



responses and incorporating them into the next iteration of proposals, the “guiding framework.” Some may disagree over priorities, needs, and solutions to problems. You can also email comments to us anytime at dts@ci.olympia.wa.us. Your comments and concerns are welcome and encouraged! If there’s a bad idea, or something we missed, please let us know. With this transparent process, we hope everyone involved will see how decisions were made.

7. What is “Urban Olympia”?

Urban Olympia V, LLC is a development company that was chosen by City Council as the preferred partner to make a proposal for a possible Water Street Redevelopment project. See question #4. You can read more about this in the for the Council’s [Community & Economic Development Committee agenda and minutes for 2/29/16](#).

8. How are you addressing accessibility for those of us who can’t walk or bike? Transit to areas not just Capital, 4th & 5th.

We have heard that 1) accessibility to the Intercity Transit Center should be improved, such as with better sidewalks and safer intersections on the surrounding streets, and 2) the DASH system should be expanded. Transit accommodation will also be an important part of any street design concepts (e.g., by including improved signage, sidewalk improvements, better street lighting in pedestrian areas, curb bulbs, ADA ramps, audible traffic controls at intersections, etc.), as well as design guidelines recommendations for private development to support transit accessibility (e.g., by providing covered areas near bus stops and convenient walkways to the bus stop). Please email additional comments regarding accessibility needs to DTS@ci.olympia.wa.us.

9. Where are bike routes?

The team is working with City Public Works Transportation staff, as well as bicycle advocates in the community, to identify important bike routes for downtown. Though the City has a Bicycle Master Plan, it does not specifically address downtown needs. The City is currently implementing a [pilot project on 7th Ave](#) called a “bike corridor” to achieve a safe and comfortable east-west connection through downtown for those cyclists less comfortable on busy streets. The Downtown Strategy may identify a north-south bicycle route through downtown, and further bike master planning may be a recommendation.

10. Why logging trucks on Plum St.?

The Port of Olympia has designated routes for logging trucks enroute to the Port marine terminal in downtown. The trucks come off the freeway at Plum Street, travel down Marine Drive and to the marine terminal. There are also trucks affiliated with Dunlop Towing on West Bay Drive that travel from West Bay down 4th Avenue to Plum Street and the freeway; these trucks are not associated with Port activity.

11. Is there parking in State parking garages? Too many parking lots (private) to be pedestrian friendly.

According to the City’s 2015 Land Use Inventory for Downtown approximately 34% of total land use (including all floors) is dedicated to parking; this is closer to 50% when only considering ground floor land uses. Yes, there is too much surface parking area in terms of creating an attractive, walkable



urban environment. At the same time, available and convenient parking is important to create a top-notch regional shopping and entertainment destination. The City will be kicking off a parking strategy in the summer of 2016 that will aim to implement the guiding framework of the DTS. As part of that effort, we will seek to collaborate with private lot owners, such as the State, to seek mutually beneficial solutions to provide parking and improve downtown.

12. What are the pros and cons of two-way traffic on State and 4th?

Two-way traffic is generally better for supporting retail facing the streets, creating a more comfortable and safer pedestrian environment with slower vehicular speeds, and easing navigation for tourists and locals, and reducing the distances vehicles have to travel (see

<http://www.planetizen.com/node/69354> and

<http://sun.louisville.edu/pdfs/love%20is%20a%20two-way%20street.pdf> for more information).

Two-way streets, in some situations, can be better for traffic flow

(<http://trrjournalonline.trb.org/doi/10.3141/2301-09>). In other situations, one-way streets are better for through traffic (rather than local traffic) by moving greater quantities of vehicles through an area more quickly, with the street acting more like a highway.

13. How can we plan where developments should be when those blocks/buildings that are already off limits are not coded on the map?

The current effort is to establish a guiding framework that describes the desired character and intensity of use within areas of downtown that include several blocks and sites. Within each of these, there will be sites that are unlikely to be redeveloped in the short term for various reasons. As needed, we can cross-reference the guiding framework with our land use inventory and Thurston County Assessor data to see what type of use currently exists on individual sites.

14. What kind of development would best benefit the average Olympia resident/business owner, i.e. people who own stock in the municipal corporation of Olympia?

All types of development can provide benefits to Olympia stakeholders if done properly.

Commercial and industrial uses provide jobs, increase the local tax base to fund public facilities and services, and provide goods and services to meet local household needs. Residential uses meet the diverse housing needs of a growing population. Some specific strategies may include adopting economic development strategies and programs that support small local businesses and start-ups and promoting adaptive reuse of older buildings (that are not necessarily historic landmarks).

15. How does new development help us? What kind? Will it pay for itself?

Olympia's Comprehensive Plan includes community vision and goals for downtown, including that it be a more compact and vibrant place with residential and employment opportunities, retail shopping, dining, arts and entertainment. New development and rehabilitation of older structures is needed to move this vision forward.

New development can provide jobs, an improved tax base, and goods and services to meet local needs. There are also costs associated with new development in the form of new public facilities and expansion of public services. In most cases, private developments pay for associated street or



other public improvements; they also pay impact fees for hooking into the public transportation, school and park system and general facility charges for hooking into the public water system.

Downtown uses will include a mix of residential, commercial, light industrial uses. A comparison of costs and benefits for a particular use can depend upon how revenues and costs are assigned. If all tax revenues associated with household purchases are assigned to the retail use, retail uses appear to be fiscally most productive. However, if the revenues are assigned to the households that provide the spending, the residential uses look more fiscally balanced. Overall, costs can be minimized if development occurs where there is existing infrastructure and services in place, such as in downtown.

16. Is the proposal for high or moderate housing density in retail core or on waterfront?

The proposals presented at Workshop 2, which were developed from input gathered at Workshop 1 and Online Survey 1, included ideas for significant residential growth north of the downtown core (near the Farmers Market and existing senior housing) and in the southeast downtown, and retained residential in the downtown core. These areas extend close to the waterfront. Current zoning generally already allows high and moderate housing density throughout much of downtown.

17. We are concerned the effect of sea level rise due to fossil fuel global warming is being unclearly estimated. Scientists are astonished at how hot the Arctic got this winter, flooding could seriously impact Olympia.

The City has been assessing scientific studies regarding flood risk from sea level rise. The City Council received a presentation on February 9, 2016 regarding sea level rise and its potential implications to our downtown. Council discussed next steps in responding sea rise. [View the presentation.](#)

The City plans to form a sea level rise strategy beginning in 2017; meanwhile, in 2016, the City is considering flood proofing measures, including raising finished floor elevations to address sea level rise. We will discuss this further with the [Council's Land Use & Environment Committee on April 21.](#)

18. What are the demographics of the 5,000 people expected over the next 20 years?

The demographics most likely to be attracted to downtown are:

- Singles without children
- Couples without children
- Retirees/ 55 and up
- Millennials (20-34 age group)

Families with children may also be attracted to the neighborhood area in the southeast.

19. What are type of incentives will the City use to promote downtown residential?

This is an important part of the Downtown Strategy work, but the specific answers are yet to be determined. We will be forming specific implementation tools in Step 4, which will occur between June-August 2016.



20. How will additional housing development impact existing housing stock and prevent gentrification of downtown?

Additional housing development can increase supply and thereby reduce upward pressure on price. The greatest pressures for increased prices occur in popular areas where no new development is allowed or occurs. It's also important that additional housing development reflect a range of types and price points. This can reduce unrealistic speculation for property price increases.

Also see responses to questions #21 and #24 regarding gentrification and displacement.

21. Will there be displacement of older, existing housing stock?

Housing stock redevelops and becomes more expensive as market forces in an area change. It is very difficult (often legally impossible) to prevent redevelopment of private property that is not being preserved through an existing program. Publicly-owned or subsidized housing stock, as well as buildings protected through historic preservation, are generally safer from displacement, but can be threatened.

Preservation tools include federal programs (typically through HUD), land trusts, tax credits, local regulations for "no net loss" of affordable units, incentive/inclusionary zoning, and so on. Working with the city and non-profit housing community, housing preservation strategies can identify "best" rehabilitation projects to rescue older at-risk buildings. Funding for this purpose is challenging, and typically cobbled together from a number of sources such as the State Housing Trust Fund, Federal Housing Tax Credit Program, Historic Tax Credit Program, Community Block Grants, etc. In addition, the displacement of older existing housing stock can be minimized by encouraging additional density in areas where infrastructure is in place and suitable sites are available. We have heard that existing housing stock in the downtown core should be retained, so a recommendation in the Downtown Strategy will likely address this.

22. What are the major barriers to bringing market rate, smaller scale owned housing downtown, including the waterfront?

In general, there are two major barriers to condominium (smaller scale owned housing) development:

- 1) On the supply side, developers and lenders are deterred from condominium development because of liability issues and the threat of future homeowner legal action.
- 2) On the demand side, the cost of single family homes in Olympia has not reached the point where condominiums are an attractive affordable alternative.

With possible changes to state law regarding liability, and with redevelopment in the downtown providing a unique housing opportunity, the demand for condominium development may be stronger in the future. In addition, our understanding is that there has not been much demand for downtown condos, although we have heard through this process that this may be an attractive option for some. As current zoning and development regulations allow this development type, a market for this type of housing (young professionals, retirees, etc.) cannot be assumed, and that demographic may need to be attracted through targeted efforts.



We will be looking at the economic feasibility of various development types, such as rentals and condos, to identify additional barriers and tools to spur desired development. Part of this analysis is to understand how to tailor zoning and development standards and robust design guidelines to achieve the desired types of housing development in the preferred locations.

23. How do we remove barriers to small business ownership of downtown and market rate housing ownership versus rental units?

Strong local businesses may be most likely to buy property downtown. The Thurston Economic Development Council has a variety of tools and programs to encourage small business survival and growth. Another strategy is to limit the size of commercial space through development regulations to ensure spaces appropriately sized for small businesses are available. An alternative approach could be to provide incentives for landlords to provide smaller spaces for rent.

24. What measures will be taken to hinder gentrification/urban displacement processes and preserve affordable housing and commercial rents?

We know this is a strong concern in the community. If nothing is done intentionally to maintain the balance of low and moderate income to market rate housing and create more diversity (types of housing and income levels) in the housing stock, the market will drive outcomes.

A first step is to reach some strong community agreement over the desired mix of housing for the future (e.g., one third low incomes, one third moderate incomes, and one third high income.) The Downtown Strategy will likely outline strategic steps to meet housing goals and implement desired tools (e.g., incentive/inclusionary zoning, tax credits, “no net loss” of affordable units regulation, housing levy, land trusts).

In regard to a mix of housing for all types of people, the current mix has a low proportion of moderate and high income units. 57% of downtown’s housing stock are subsidized or low income units; 20% are existing market rate units, 18% are market rate units under construction, and 5% are live-aboard marina housing. As new market rate projects are completed and leased up, they will provide evidence of the strength of the housing market downtown and facilitate additional market-rate housing. Zoning regulations and design guidelines that vary throughout the downtown can also ensure that different types of housing can occur in different areas. The Downtown Strategy will perform economic feasibility analyses to suggest ways to increase the diversity of housing downtown while maintaining current residents.

25. How will this be funded?

Much of the development that occurs downtown will be paid for by private development. The City may make strategic investments to enhance public spaces such as streets and sidewalks. The City already plans to leverage a portion of the capital budget reserved for pavement management to transform 5 downtown street segments over the next 6 years (segments of Capitol Way, Jefferson, Washington, Legion and Franklin;) not only will the City repave these streets, additional money will be added to transform the design of these segments to increase walkability and attractiveness. Recommendations to the City’s capital improvement plan will be made a later step in the process, at



which time specific funding tools will be identified. The City may also enter into partnerships to achieve certain goals, and these are also to be determined.

26. How will zoning changes be addressed?

Once a guiding framework is firmed up in mid-May, we will determine whether any changes to the current zoning are needed to align with the DTS. This would be communicated within the draft DTS (Fall 2016). Any changes to zoning, development and design standards would go before the Planning Commission for a public hearing and recommendation, and be ultimately decided by the City Council.

27. In order to encourage density, is the City going to reconsider its height restrictions?

Any potential changes to height restrictions will be considered in conjunction with view protection and other standards. During the spring the DTS team is conducting a viewshed analysis that will be shared with the public for feedback at the June 6 public workshop.

While increasing the heights of buildings constructed in downtown from the current situation of low-rise (i.e., 2-4 story) buildings will be necessary to meet our goals, increasing our height restrictions in the development code will be an unlikely catalyst for such change. In most areas of downtown buildings can already go up to 75', with some areas allowing a 2-story bonus on top of that for residential development. Over the past few decades, there just hasn't been much of a market for taller structures, although this may begin to change. That said, with the current available land and heights, it will probably be a while before going above 75' would make financial sense in downtown since the cost of construction goes up significantly after 75' due to building code requirements.

28. Is the City willing to look at strict permitting, parking and other requirements and restrictions that make it challenging for entrepreneurs to bring strong business concepts to the City? i.e. – My husband wants to put a restaurant into a commercial space up 4th Ave. just out of “downtown” on Central according to zoning but the parking space requirement 1/100 sq.ft. is too restrictive! With all the businesses/homes in area, people would walk or bike! Too much emphasis on driving/parking!

Yes, the City will kick off a parking strategy update in summer of 2016, which will be aligned with the guiding framework for the Downtown Strategy. Examining needed changes to the City's parking standards will be part of that effort.

29. The City of Olympia just had a report from the Utility that the City should expect about 4 – 8 feet of sea level rise by 2100. Sea level rise might reach 23 feet under certain scenarios. How is sea level rise being factored into the Downtown Strategy?

Please see question #17.



30. If downtown (or some portion) is going to be defended against sea level rise, who is going to pay for it? I suggest a district LID. Is it the City's responsibility to caution new development about the problems caused by sea level rise? Are building codes adequate to prevent damage from liquefaction during an earthquake?

Please see question #17. The upcoming Sea Level Rise strategy will include consideration of funding mechanisms and partnerships to implement it.

The construction codes are very clear as to design requirements for questionable soils considerations, including soils at risk for liquefaction which exist in downtown. In most cases a rock pile soil amendment or steel piles are used for stability; specific designs vary from site to site and will be based the soil conditions and structural engineers. Developers are well aware of the escalated cost of construction due to the design provisions required because of liquefaction and they consider this during feasibility for project cost.

A structural assessment of existing buildings is a potential action for the 6-year implementation strategy that will be reflected in the draft DTS to be prioritized among other actions. Such as assessment is a first step in determining risk for existing infrastructure and possible grant opportunities for retrofits.

31. What is the plan for adapting to sea level rise? It seems this needs to be addressed in accordance with creating a vision for downtown.

Please see question #17.

32. What is the plan for arriving at a decision regarding Capitol Lake (lake vs. estuary)? Also important to creating a vision for downtown.

The State of Washington owns Capitol Lake, thus it will make the decision. Earlier this year, the State convened a stakeholder group to make a recommendation for the decision-making process. The City of Olympia is part of that stakeholder group, and will support whatever the final decision is. The Downtown Strategy will be structured so that it can work for either a lake or estuary, and if any adjustments are needed following the State's decision, we will do that.

33. How to ensure a mix of housing for all types of people?

The standards allow for various types of housing development, including studio, townhomes, apartments of various scale and even single family. What is built will largely be driven by the market. There are things the City can do to incentive certain types of housing development to ensure affordable space for various demographics - please see questions #21 and #24 for more.

34. How would partnerships help meet needs? i.e. YMCA rebuild aquatics center, other services and activities, YMCA rebuild is a huge opportunity.

Partnerships involving public as well as private entities can be an effective tool for pulling together financing and other resources to accomplish goals. Some examples include:

- The City's current public/private partnership for a potential Water Street Redevelopment Project (see question #4)



- The Hands on Children’s Museum, LOTT office building and East Bay Plaza development, developed through a partnership of the City, LOTT, Port of Olympia, and the museum including many private donors.

Potential project ideas such as redevelopment of the YMCA or creation of affordable housing, studio, retail space for artists are examples of that we agree would likely benefit from partnerships.

35. What is the projected cost of cleaning up the buildings near East Bay that were contaminated in the past?

It’s hard to estimate the cost of cleaning up ground and soil contamination until specific testing and ultimately digging occurs at a specific site. For example, it was originally assumed that the Hands on Children’s Museum site would be more contaminated than the Olympia City Hall site, but once construction commenced the opposite was found. The City has cleaned numerous sites associated with public developments; some recent examples include:

Name of Site	Description	Approximate Cost of Remediation/ Funded by
City Hall (former Safeway site) 601 4 th Ave, Downtown	In 2007, the City purchased this 1.23 acre parcel to build a new 4-story, \$35.6m office building. The site contained soil and groundwater contamination. The City entered an Agreed Order with from the Department of Ecology (DOE) and received 2 grants from DOE to remediate the site.	City = \$4.6m DOE Grants = \$3.8m Total = \$8.4m
Hands On Children’s Museum East Bay, Downtown	The new Hands on Children’s Museum (HOCM) was developed as part of the larger Energizing East Bay project, a partnership between the City, Port of Olympia, LOTT Clean Water Alliance and HOCM. As part of the project, the City purchased the museum site from the Port and remediated it 100%. At the time of purchase, the property was known to contain soil and groundwater contamination from former land uses, especially timber-related industries.	City = \$446k DOE Grant = \$463k Reimbursed from LOTT = \$17k Total = \$926k
State Avenue Parking Lot (former DOT Site near the Transit Center) Downtown	In 2008, the City reached an agreement to purchase the former Department of Transportation (DOT) Materials Testing Lab site from the State of Washington. The purchase and sale agreement called for the City to clean up the site and be reimbursed by an escrow account set up with the proceeds of the purchase (\$1,284,462).	So far, over \$1m has been reimbursed to the City out of the escrow account.
Percival Landing Waterfront,	The City completed Phase 1 rehabilitation of Percival Landing in 2011, which included removal of over 200 creosote (toxic) pilings and other remediation efforts. The 3.38 acre park also includes properties that were once used as a tank farm for UnoCal Hulco. The south side of Percival Landing is still in the	Bond = \$172m Grant = \$44k 2% Voted Utility Tax = \$114k City = 147k



east side of Budd Bay, Downtown	clean-up process; DOE has required additional testing, and approved the City's work plan for this, which includes another 2 years of additional investigation. In 2014, the City executed an environmental covenant for the former UnoCal property (northern site), and DOE is preparing a "No Further Action" letter for this portion of Percival Landing.	Total = \$447k
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36. Should the City investigate the toxin levels in areas likely to be used by children as in adjacent to the Hands on Children's Museum?

Washington State Department of Ecology (DOE) regulates remediation under the Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA). In general, contaminated sites are reported, listed and prioritized by DOE for remediation; contamination associated with a site must be addressed, even if the contamination crosses lot lines. Tests are conducted before new construction occurs, and if contamination is found it must be reported to Ecology's Toxics Cleanup Program within 90 days of discovery (unless it involves a release of hazardous materials from an underground storage tank system, in which case the site discovery must be reported to Ecology within 24 hours.)

In the case of the Hands on Children Museum and East Bay Plaza site, extensive clean-up was conducted when that development occurred.

The Downtown Strategy will outline steps to implement the following policy from the Comprehensive Plan, and specific steps will be determined during June-August:

PE4.6: Economic uncertainty created by site contamination can be a barrier to development in downtown and elsewhere in our community; identify potential tools, partnerships and resources that can be used to create more economic certainty for developments by better characterizing contamination where doing so fulfills a public purpose.

37. Can we pull together an interdisciplinary team (Elected, City Staff, developer, energy & water specialists) and funding (\$6,000 for 5 people & \$1,200 per person) to send to the EcoDistricts Incubator annually each April? See EcoDistricts.org

We can check this out.

38. Please eliminate the barrier on Jefferson Street at 7th Avenue. What is that there for anyway?

Yes, the barrier will be removed in conjunction with the 2016 [Bicycle Corridor](#) pilot project and development of 321 Lofts at the corner of Jefferson and 7th Ave. The jersey barriers have been there for a long time, possibly since the 60's. The record of why they are there is not available; however our guess was they were installed to prevent people from assuming they could continue to drive along 7th across Jefferson.

39. The Olympia Bicycle-Pedestrian Committee has done an extensive study on downtown linkage of same, why was that info not presented a these two meetings?

Due to time constraints we aren't able to present all the known information about prior work conducted by the City. The DTS team is in regular communication with the Public Works



transportation team and we are aware of the recent work by BPAC to recommend the east-west bicycle corridor as well as proposed north-south route along Washington Ave.

40. Why are we not addressing climate changes – flooding/liquefaction in the event of an earthquake? The costs?

Please see questions #17 and #30.

We do not have cost information at this time. Cost estimates will vary by project. After a guiding framework is established by mid-May, the DTS team will prepare proformas for various types of desired downtown development; these will factor in construction costs for flood proofing and structural engineering required to address earthquake risk.