

Neighborhood Centers



What are neighborhood centers?

Neighborhood centers are small walk and transit-friendly business clusters within residential neighborhoods that serve the day-to-day retail and service needs of local residents and foster community interaction. Neighborhood centers are important to community-wide goals to increase walkability, reduce our carbon footprint, improve human health, and foster neighborhood connections and resiliency.

Olympia's Comprehensive Plan identifies 17 general locations for neighborhood centers. The existing conditions of these sites vary - from thriving retail centers to vacant or completely undeveloped.

Creating neighborhood centers in Olympia

Despite long-held goals to encourage them, neighborhood centers have not manifested as envisioned over the past 20 years. The Olympia Planning Commission (OPC) has sought to find out why, and help create a successful path to achieving this important community goal.

Work on the neighborhood centers began in 2014 with the Commission gathering input about the public's desires as well as barriers to neighborhood center development. They launched an online questionnaire and received 668 responses. They also interviewed 13 business owners and 8 property owners who have operated a business, designed or developed a neighborhood center in Olympia.

- [View the 2014 outreach summary](#)

Next steps include City staff sharing the results of outreach efforts with the neighborhoods and other stakeholder groups, assessing land use and market conditions associated with the neighborhood center locations, and identifying next steps such as changes to the Comprehensive Plan and Municipal Code that could make neighborhood center goals easier to achieve.

Any proposed changes will be considered by the Planning Commission, and informational briefings and public hearings will be held prior to making a recommendation to the City Council. It is anticipated that this work will

occur in 2021 and 2022.

Not included in this scope of work:

- Visioning or master planning for specific neighborhood centers.
- Regulations that apply to neighborhood centers areas that are located within master planned Urban Villages (Briggs) or Neighborhood Villages (Mill Pond, Woodbury Crossing). These villages all have approved master plans.

Additional information & resources

- [Olympian Article about Wildwood](#)
- ["Creating Walkable Business Districts" by J. Owen and G. Easton](#)

Questions?

Contact Cari Hornbein at 360.753.8048 or chornbei@ci.olympia.wa.us.

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