



January 27, 2025

City of Olympia Mayor and City Council
Olympia Planning Commission

Honorable Mayor Payne and City of Olympia Councilmembers,

On June 24, 2024 the Social Justice and Equity Commission received a briefing on the City's Comprehensive Plan 10 Year Periodic Update regarding the Natural Environment Chapter. Kym Foley, Environmental Habitat Planner (Public Works – Water Resources) and staff lead for this chapter update, provided a comprehensive overview of the chapter, the update process, and key themes emerging from community, stakeholder, and Tribal engagement.

This briefing included a compelling discussion on how social justice and equity have thus far been embedded into both the update process and the policy language itself. The Commission noted the effort that was made to ensure diverse perspectives were heard and incorporated, finding the public input and stakeholder engagement process to be both inclusive and accessible. This included engagement with local government agencies, non-profit organizations, schools and youth groups, City advisory committees, and the general public through online surveys, workshops, focus group meetings, and community tabling events.

In particular, the Commission appreciates the work that was done to engage with Natural Resources and Climate Program staff from the Squaxin Island Tribe and incorporate their input. This includes proposed edits to the chapter supporting actions toward salmon recovery, water quality enhancement, and environmental programming that acknowledges and incorporates Tribal knowledge and stewardship of these lands since time immemorial.

While the Commission has no specific additions or edits requested for the current draft, we recommend staff to consider the following challenges, to be addressed in the Natural Environment or other Comprehensive Plan chapters if not already incorporated:

- Encampments and illicit activities in natural areas create barriers to accessing parks, either by directly obstructing access or by minimizing perceived safety
- Road and sidewalk damage caused by trees creates substantial accessibility/mobility challenges
- Planning for earthquakes (and other large scale natural disasters)

Lastly, the Commission would like to express its support for the overarching evolution of this chapter, noting the intentional shift from a focus on aesthetic beauty and sense of place toward policies to support balance and reciprocity between a healthy natural environment and a thriving, sustainable, livable city. We appreciated the

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opportunity to review goals and policies within the Natural Environment chapter of the Comprehensive Plan, provide feedback on the update process, and learn how this work promotes environmental justice and equity in Olympia.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Rosen-Evans". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robin Rosen-Evans, Vice Chair
Social Justice & Equity Commission

RR:kf