

## **Public Involvement and Communication Strategy**

### ***Connecting Places & Spaces: Olympia's Downtown Strategy***

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#### **Background**

The Comprehensive Plan includes high level vision and goals for downtown, and directs the City to have a 'plan for downtown.' Intended to implement these vision and goals, this 'plan' is referred to as *Connecting Places and Spaces: Olympia's Downtown Strategy*.

The Downtown Strategy will be developed over a period of approximately 12 months, and will involve a high level of public and stakeholder participation. Staff anticipates hiring an urban design firm plus other consultant experts that may be contracted by that firm (consultant team) to assist with strategy development. The strategy will define a set of prioritized initiatives that will have the greatest strategic impact toward achieving our vision for downtown:

*People walk throughout downtown, shop at its **small businesses**, enjoy its **artistic offerings** and gather at its many **fine restaurants** and meeting places. The **historic Capitol Way** links the **waterfront** and downtown to the **Capitol Campus** invites and attracts **residents** to enjoy the City's **civic spaces**. **Plazas, expanded sidewalks, and art in public places** have stimulated **private investment in residential development**, which, in turn, has greatly increased downtown's **retail and commercial vitality**.*

*Downtown will continue to be an **attractive place to live, work and play**. Future office, retail and residential development will bolster downtown's role as a **regional center and home of state government, commerce, and industry**.*

#### **Downtown will be:**

- Home to **25% of the city's future residential growth**;
- The social, cultural and economic center of the region;
- An attractive and sustainable place to live, work and play;
- A mix of office, retail and residential uses;
- Full of public art, significant landscaping and public spaces;
- A pedestrian and bicycle friendly environment, and
- Protected from the effects of sea level rise.

Since 1994, the City and other public partners have invested over \$120m to construct major public spaces downtown, such as a City Hall, Hands On Children Museum and East Bay Plaza, Heritage Park and Fountain, Market District, and renovations to Percival Landing and the Washington Center for Performing Arts (map is attached.) These strategic investments have forwarded many of our downtown goals, including providing amenities and incentive to spur development of market-rate housing. Although housing goals were slow to materialize during the 1990's and 2000's, since 2012 downtown Olympia has added over 200 multi-family units. Current demographic and market trends provide a strategic opportunity to leverage previous investments to achieve multiple goals for downtown.

**Purpose for a Downtown Strategy:**

A Downtown Strategy will help foster a rich diversity of downtown places and spaces that will attract and support people who live, work and play in downtown Olympia, including 5,000 new downtown residents.

**Fundamental Concept for 2015-2020:**

*Connecting and enhancing downtown places and spaces*

**We will connect and enhance downtown places & spaces by:**

- Reducing uncertainty related to development (for the development community and public) (*i.e., uncertain standards or risks*)
- Encouraging private investment (in terms of both new construction and rehabilitation)
- Enhancing public spaces to create a more active, pedestrian-friendly environment (*sidewalks, art, landscaping, plazas, streets, etc.*)
- Continuing to ensure the environment and historic resources are protected and reinforced by future development

**Goals for the Public Process**

- Follow the public participation goals & policies in the Comprehensive Plan, including:
  - Provide a transparent process that enables open, meaningful and respectful dialogue among a broad array of stakeholders and opinions
  - Provide information and outreach materials through a variety of means
  - Use creative methods to engage under-represented groups and people
- Educate and enable dialogue that builds broader community understanding of current conditions and market opportunities in downtown
- Clearly articulate what is being asked of the public, how their input will be used, and report back about what was heard
- Use visually-oriented, data-driven information
- Build and maintain the momentum of public engagement
- Draw on previous planning efforts – complement them, do not recreate them
- Focus efforts on what is realistic, vital and impactful
- Manage expectations, address false assumptions and provide consistent messages
- Keep the City Council and Planning Commission regularly updated and involved

## Target Audiences

Downtown Olympia is an important destination for a broad spectrum of local and regional community members, as evidenced through multiple City engagement efforts. The following are considered target audiences for Downtown Strategy outreach:

- Olympia residents and outside visitors
- Local organizations, boards and committees
- Property Owners
- Business Owners
- Downtown Residents and Employees
- Developers and Investment Community
- Individual Stakeholders and Interest Groups
- Thurston County and the seven jurisdictions within, in particular the urban Cities of Lacey and Tumwater; Thurston Regional Planning Council
- Utilities and Service Providers (*Intercity Transit, Puget Sound Energy, etc.*)
- City Council, Advisory Boards and department staff

Hereafter, when this plan mentions “public” engagement, this implies all of the above.

## Communication Tools *(see attached Tools & Level of Public Participation document)*

- Open House in April
- Info Sheets
- Festival Booths
- Window displays
- Public workshops
- Website
- Social Media
- Utility Billing
- Street Banners
- E-Newsletter
- TCTV announcements
- Press Releases & E-Blasts
- City Council meetings
- Advisory Board briefings
- Presentations to community groups and other stakeholders
- Possible Surveys (perhaps through Olyspeaks)



## Communication and Outreach

### Points of Contact:

- Amy Buckler - Project Management, Day to Day contact
- Brian Wilson, Day to Day contact
- Leonard Bauer - Management Contact
- Urban Design Firm – Lead for consultant team

### Description of Public Engagement Activities:

#### April Open House

- This engagement opportunity is about the **scope** (actually developing the strategy kicks off in the Fall)
- Inform target audiences: What is *Connecting Places & Spaces*? How can people be involved and when? Share information about known existing conditions in downtown
- Opportunity for the public to comment on the draft scope, with targeted questions about how people want to be involved during strategy development
- Tentative Dates: Wed., April 29 and/or Thurs., April 30, 2015

#### Summer 2015 Engagement Activities

- Continue information campaign:
  - Outreach materials, such as E-Newsletter, utility inserts, website
  - Booths at downtown festivals
  - Downtown window displays
- Gather more information, including update the Inventory of Land Uses (aka, '2010 Economic Development map') and possible surveying of businesses, employees, residents and/or visitors

#### Public 'Workshops' Fall 2015-Spring 2016

*Following is a conceptual framework – details to be negotiated with the consultant team*

- This is where **public engagement in actual strategy development begins**
- Broad, open participation process that engages public/stakeholders in the evaluation of information and alternatives
- A series of public workshops hosted by the City - the first to be held in Fall of 2015
- Some workshop topics may entail more than one day/evening
- Workshops build on each other and inform development of the Downtown Strategy
- The workshops might focus on things like:
  1. **Understanding Downtown Dynamics**
    - Provide geographically-plotted data about current downtown conditions and market opportunities and engage in discussion about downtown dynamics and preferences
    - **Outcomes:** Identify initial market districts and some possible initiatives for further consideration as process moves forward

## 2. View Protection & Skyline Analysis

- Using visual tools, engage a broad array of stakeholders in evaluation of alternatives and preferences for downtown skyline and view protection
- **Outcomes:**
- View protection alternatives to be forwarded to the Planning Commission (OPC) for review, public hearing and recommendation to City Council
- Refined understanding of development and design potential in areas throughout downtown – to be considered as process moves forward.

## 3. Review of Design Standards

- Using illustrative tools, evaluate current and potential design and streetscape standards
- **Outcomes:**
  - Illustrations that graphically express preferred end-states, which can be incorporated into the Downtown Strategy
  - Ideas for alternative standards or approaches to downtown design and streetscape standards - to be considered for inclusion into strategy (*any code changes would be forwarded to OPC for review, public hearing and recommendation to Council*)

## 4. Greening Capitol Way – Phase 2

- Using illustrative tools, review and evaluate ideas from the 2014 Greening Capitol Way process
- **Outcomes:**
  - Understanding trade-offs and community/stakeholder priorities for improvements to Capitol Way

## Roles/Tasks

The following outlines roles and associated tasks for various groups that will be involved in the development of the Downtown Strategy. Examples of possible tasks for the Planning Commission and a 'Stakeholder Group' are identified and will be chartered with involvement of representatives from these groups and the consultant team.

### City Council

**Role:** Decision maker

**Tasks:**

- Define the scope of the strategy
- Members attend public workshops/meetings to listen and observe
- Receive input from all interested individuals and groups
- Provide final direction on the contents of the Strategy
- Adopt the Downtown Strategy

### **Council Appointed Advisors:**

#### **Olympia Planning Commission**

**Role:** Ensure Strategy's consistency with the Comprehensive Plan

*Examples of possible tasks for the Planning Commission are identified and will be chartered with involvement of the Commission and consultant team.*

#### **Possible Tasks:**

- 1-2 members sit on consultant selection team
- Members attend public workshops/meetings to listen and observe
- 1-2 members participate in 'Stakeholder Group'
- Review final draft strategy and provide final recommendation to City Council regarding the Strategy's consistency with the Comprehensive Plan
- Hold a public hearing and make a recommendation to the City Council regarding any proposed development code changes resulting from strategy
- Receive monthly updates from staff

#### **Other City Advisory Boards & Commissions**

**Role:** Advise Council and staff on potential initiatives to include in the Strategy

#### **Tasks:**

- Receive an informational briefing from staff
- In line with scope, make recommendations for initiatives pertaining to expert purpose and role for consideration by staff and City Council
- Members may participate, listen and/or observe public workshops/meetings

### **Staff/Consultant Team**

**Role:** Ensure the public process is carried out in accordance with the City's public participation goals and policies and the scope for the Downtown Strategy; research, analysis, writing, development of strategy drafts

#### **Staff Tasks:**

- Manage RFP/Q process and City's interaction with consultant team
- Creation and maintenance of public engagement materials (with help from consultant team)
- Provide information and presentations to community groups
- Communicate with the Port of Olympia and State Capitol Campus and seek to make connections between the Downtown Strategy and Port of Olympia Real Estate Development and State Capitol Master Plans
- Research, analysis and writing for the strategy (with help from consultant team)

#### **Consultant Team Tasks:**

*(This is not the RFP/Q, which will be more specific and drafted separately)*

- Prepare data, analysis, illustrations and visual/oral presentations, including:

- Sample text and graphics that can be incorporated into materials;
- Visualization tools for engaging public in evaluating alternatives for downtown view protection and skyline;
- Analyze and make any recommendations for changes to downtown design and streetscape standards, and prepare illustrations that express the desired end state;
- Other specific tasks as outlined in RFP/Q
- Support staff and Stakeholder Work Group in preparation of workshop materials

**Stakeholder Group:**

**Role:** Provide advice to staff & consultants during public process and drafting of strategy  
*Examples of possible tasks for a Stakeholder Group are identified - tasks and level of commitment will be chartered with involvement of stakeholder representatives and consultant team.*

**Possible Tasks:**

- Provide input to the consultant team and staff to bolster information and analysis
- Review presentation materials and provide comments and suggestions for refinements
- Endorse the strategy and engage other community members
- No formal recommendation or decision-making role
- When this group meets together it would occur in an open public meeting

**Group make-up:**

- Made up of key downtown stakeholders and community leaders with a high degree of respect and knowledge of the community and downtown issues
- A maximum of 12-15 people. This group will be more effective if kept to a manageable number of people. Other cities, including Lacey and Tumwater, recommend a maximum of 15 people.
- Suggested representation from:
  1. Olympia Planning Commission
  2. Parking Business & Improvement Area
  3. Olympia Downtown Association
  4. Downtown Neighborhood Association
  5. Visitors & Convention Bureau
  6. The Home Consortium
  7. Coalition of Neighborhoods
  8. Key property owner/developer
  9. A Financer
  10. An Architect
  11. Citizen at Large
  12. xxx



- Selection of individuals:
  - Individuals representing established groups (i.e., #'s 1-7) will be asked to appoint their representative to the stakeholder group
  - Other individuals (i.e., #'s 8-11) will be selected by staff based on their expertise, community perspective and ability to work well with others

Public/Target Audiences

**Role:** Participate and share perspective, ideas and preferences throughout the process

**Tasks - If interested:**

- Attend and comment at April Open House
- Put name on Downtown Strategy contact list to receive public notices and information
- Participate in public workshops, listen to other community members and share perspective and preferences
- Provide public hearing testimony to Planning Commission on any Code changes
- Host a staff presentation on the Downtown Strategy for your community group