

ROUGH DRAFT – 8/30/12

LONG-RANGE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INVESTMENT PLAN

Preliminary Findings of the Olympia Planning Commission Finance Subcommittee

(Note: The following findings were drafted by Subcommittee Chair Roger Horn based on subcommittee discussion; they have not been reviewed by the subcommittee.)

On June 7, 2012, the Council Finance Committee asked the Planning Commission to examine whether and how a long-range community development investment plan (LCDIP) could benefit the community and to report back with recommendations as a component of presentation on the annual Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) letter. Based on the conversation with the Finance Committee and a related conversation with the Mayor, the proposed plan should provide linkage to the Comprehensive Plan, educate the Council on the big picture community perspective, and provide a means for evaluating progress toward achieving Comprehensive Plan (CP) development goals. The evaluation within the plan should create the connection between aspirations and achievements. The plan also should coordinate with neighborhood/subarea plans and consider advisory committee recommendations.

Following are the draft findings of the subcommittee largely based on a discussion on July 30, 2012, which included Councilmember Langer, Mike McCormick, former director of the state Growth Management Office, and Thera Black, senior planner for the Thurston Regional Planning Council:

1. According to Mike McCormick, the GMA requires 20-year CFP that, at a minimum addresses transportation and utilities. Such a plan would represent truth in planning since the Comprehensive Plan is a 20-year document. Even if the out-years are at a coarse level, the plan would be helpful. If the CFP didn't support investments identified in the CP, the CP would need to be revised. City staff feels the current CFP chapter meets all GMA requirements.
2. A 20-year investment plan would answer the question "if we can't have it all, how do we choose?" The plan should determine the community's capacity to maintain current assets, would be an integral part of the planning process, and could help policymakers choose investments that attract high quality private investment. The plan would help ensure CP ideas are not just "pie in the sky" but, unlike many previous plans now sitting on shelves, are grounded in financial reality. The City must know its financial capacity in order to set priorities.
3. The 6-year CFP should be done in the context of the 20-year LCDIP. For a 6-year plan to be effective, policymakers must know the long-range context. Citizens want to know the long-range direction as presented in the CP. The LCDIP would ensure that the CP vision is realistic and would provide the community's financial commitment to achieve it.
4. Some tools needed to accomplish the LCDIP would be long-range financial, jobs, and population forecasts, an updated version of the Long Term Financial Strategy, and long-range system plans such as the Transportation Mobility Strategy and utility and parks system plans.

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5. The City will need to determine whether assumptions should be established unilaterally or collaboratively with other jurisdictions. If working with other jurisdictions, all should be on the same update schedule.
6. In addition to new infrastructure, the plan needs to consider maintenance as an essential cost item.
7. Some factors that argue against a LCDIP are the uncertainty of projected data beyond six years, uncertainty about people's behavior and societal and environmental changes, and the time and money needed to do such a plan each year or two years.
8. The counter-arguments are that the CP provides policies that can be assumed in future assumptions, such as reduced use of energy and resources and greater reliance on non-motorized transportation. The City would need to determine whether the benefits of the LCDIP justify the additional cost. Even if the out-year analysis is fuzzy, it has value.
9. It would be essential for the neighborhoods to be a part of the process. The draft CP envisions sub-areas plans that would cover the entire city. The recent MOU between the City and the Olympia Coalition of Neighborhoods (CNA) will provide input to the city concerning goals and objectives related to growth in neighborhoods and ensuring that new development will fit within existing neighborhoods. A 20-year context would provide stronger assurance that short-term capital expenditures will result in outcomes consistent with neighborhood visions for growth or whether financial constraints over the long term will prevent accomplishment of neighborhood priorities.
10. Determining financial capacity and priorities are important, but to create a meaningful plan will require leadership, community buy-in, and other elements, such as the cooperation and support of other jurisdictions.
11. The LCDIP could support other long-range planning efforts endorsed by the City, such as the Urban Transit Corridors strategic recommendations of the TRPC Urban Corridors Task Force and recommendations that result from the Sustainable Thurston project. On the other hand, the LCDIP could provide suggestions that shape regional plans or guide the City's participation in these efforts. It also could provide a longer range perspective for City strategies such as the use of Community Renewal strategies and the periodic update of the City's Shoreline Master Plan.
12. A long-range CDIP would provide a more realistic time frame for impact fee-related transportation projects. The current CFP Draft includes several impact fee-funded transportation projects that cannot realistically be funded in the 6-year CFP period given historical impact fee collections. While staff feels the projects need to be listed, the public might have the impression that these projects will at least be started in the next six years. The CDIP would provide a time frame that would present a truer picture of what projects will be funded in six years and which would be started in the outyears.

The Planning Commission will develop recommendations following the work session with the City Council Finance Committee on September 13th.