

Olympia Planning Commission

March 18, 2024

Olympia City Council
PO Box 1967 Olympia
WA 98507-1967

SUBJECT: Olympia 2045 Comprehensive Plan Economy Chapter

Dear Mayor Payne and Councilmembers:

The Planning Commission is pleased to recommend approval of the Economy Chapter of the Olympia 2045 Comprehensive Plan, with suggested modifications and comments below. We understand this update work is being completed in a phased manner, with each chapter being considered individually. We also understand that final adoption will not occur until the entire draft is reviewed for internal consistency as well.

The Commission had briefings on the Chapter on June 5, 2023, and January 22, 2024. A public hearing was conducted on February 26, 2024. Commission deliberations took place on February 26 and March 18, 2024.

We support the chapter's emphasis on being focused on people. We commend the City for the broad outreach it did around these issues for both the Olympia Strong Plan and the Economy Chapter of the Olympia 2045 Comprehensive Plan update. After completing deliberations, the motion to recommend approval of the chapter includes the following suggestions or modifications:

1. In the "Enriching our Sense of Place and Creative Economy" section (beginning on page 13 of the Track Changes version of the public hearing draft), consider adding the suggested sentence below to the second paragraph:

Olympians desire a community that offers a variety of entertainment, cultural, arts, heritage, and recreational opportunities that honor the rich diversity of our community. "Arts" encompasses a wide range of expressions, including but not limited to visual and culinary arts, local artisans, live music, theater, and diverse live performances and festivals across various genres. We also know that employers and entrepreneurs often choose to locate in cities with a vibrant mix of activities and culture because talented workers want to live in such places. Thus, we see enhancing Olympia's creative vibe and sense of place as both a benefit to those who already live here, and a way to attract quality employment opportunities and expand on Olympia's reputation as a unique place in South Puget Sound.

2. To clarify that broadband is included in telecommunications infrastructure, we suggest the following changes to PE 9.8:

PE9.8: Investigate the feasibility of the City providing telecommunications and broadband infrastructure, high speed internet connectivity or other new forms of infrastructure.

3. In consideration of emerging technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence, we suggest adding a new policy to Goal 5, as follows:

PE 5.10 Actively monitor emerging technology and trends, such as AI, to determine its impact or value to our economy.

4. We suggest that prior to final adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, Economy Goal #7 be reviewed for consistency with and opportunities to support the Visitor Convention Bureau's Destination Master Plan, which is nearing completion but is not yet adopted.
5. Consider adding an additional sentence to Policy PE 4.3 to support commercial, residential, and mixed use development infill within the portions of the City designated as Urban Corridors.

PE4.3: Ensure the total amount of land planned for commercial and industrial uses is sufficient and appropriately zoned to meet expected demand. Promote commercial infill and a mix of land uses, especially in areas designated as Urban Corridors.

6. We understand the intent of the revisions proposed for Policy PE 6.5 were about connecting the Capitol Campus and the Downtown and the intent of connecting people to jobs and services. We suggest modifying the language, as follows:

PE6.5: Support public transit to connect people with jobs and services, including increasing the span and frequency of public transit between the Capitol Campus and Downtown Olympia.

7. Goal 9 relates to the City achieving maximum economic, environmental and social benefit from public infrastructure. We suggest adding a new policy, PE9.13:

PE9.13: Public rights-of-way are a form of public infrastructure that can be used for economic and social benefits, such as street fairs, parklets, or other similar uses.

We appreciate the opportunity to review the proposed chapter and provide a recommendation for moving this portion of the periodic update forward. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Zainab Nejati
Chair