

Olympia  
December 8, 2015

Keith Stahley  
Leonard Bauer

Community Planning and Development Department  
City of Olympia

Keith and Leonard:

At last evening's meeting of the Planning Commission, I expressed both my support for the draft Parks Plan and my concern regarding the elimination of residential development in those major parcels identified in the Plan for acquisition by the City. Mr. Turlove responded that a study by the TRPC suggested the residential development planned for these parcels could be accommodated within the City. This is accurate but inadequate if the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan are to be achieved.

Clearly, if future residential development were to occur at the densities allowed by current zoning in the City, the acquisitions proposed in the Parks Plan would not constitute a net loss of residential development in the City. It is my understanding, however, that actual densities in the City are well below those allowed by code and that the bulk of recent residential development is in areas zoned for less dense development and that even in those areas, actual densities are often below permitted densities. While there is a current increase in construction of multi-family and townhouse construction in the City, there is no clear reason to expect that current and future residential development in those portions of the City zoned for denser development will, in fact, be sufficient to accommodate the number of units that will be removed from development by the acquisitions proposed in the Parks Plan.

The consequence of these patterns of residential development suggests that a significant portion of expected residential development in the region will occur outside of the City. This will, as you well know, reduce the rural land inventory and the natural resource attributes of those lands. Concurrently, it will, as you also know well, reduce the desired densities within the City that have been identified in the Comprehensive Plan as critical to improved public transit, improved range of residential options, especially for the young and the retired portions of the population, and construction of small scale commercial destinations important to increased walking and biking. In summary, all of the likely patterns of residential development identified above directly conflict with the goals and policies in the Comprehensive Plan for a more compact City.

For these reasons, I urge the Department of Community Planning and Development to develop and propose to the Planning Commission and the City Council a set of incentives and policies that will assure that at a minimum, the residential units that would be removed from development by the proposed acquisitions in the Parks Plan be constructed within the City in those locations where such construction is permitted under existing zoning.

Sincerely,

Jerry Parker  
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N.B.: I am submitting this communication as a private citizen. This communication does not represent the position of the Olympia Planning Commission of which I am a member nor of any other member of the Commission.