

The Moving Forward With CRA and the Downtown Plan

The Comprehensive Plan:

The Comprehensive Plan sets forth the city's overall vision for downtown. Some key elements of that vision describe downtown as:

- A social, cultural and economic center of the region
- An attractive place to live, work and play
- A complete neighborhood with a mix of office, retail and residential uses – including 25% of the city's future residential growth
- A place that contains public art, significant landscaping and public spaces throughout

The Vision Statement from the Land Use Element of the proposed Comprehensive Plan is:

A walkable, vibrant city.

We envision a capital city of pedestrian-oriented streetscapes, livable and affordable neighborhoods, safe and meaningful street life, and high-quality civic architecture. Through collaboration with other agencies and partners, our urban waterfront will be a priceless asset, eventually running along the Deschutes River from Tumwater's historic buildings, down past Marathon and Heritage parks to Percival Landing and the Port Peninsula.

Capitol Way will be a busy and historic boulevard linking the waterfront and downtown to the Capitol Campus. By creating plazas, expanded sidewalks, and public art in public places, we will stimulate private investment in residential and commercial development, increasing downtown Olympia's retail and commercial vitality.

Olympia will work to create "urban nodes" of higher density and mixed-use development in specific locations along our urban corridor. We will encourage infill projects and remodeling of older structures; in turn we will begin to create a more walkable community, where historic buildings and neighborhoods are valued, preserved, and adapted to new uses.

Well-implemented neighborhood sub-area planning will help us determine unique neighborhood assets to protect and enhance; where and how to increase density and retain green space; and develop safe and convenient access to everything from grocery stores, to schools, neighborhood parks, community gardens and neighborhood gathering places.

Some key goals specific to the downtown from the proposed Comprehensive Plan:

PL1.7 Enable frequent transit service, support housing, utilize existing infrastructure, provide public improvements and concentrate new major shopping, entertainment and office uses downtown, in the medical services area of Lilly Road, near the Capital Mall, and in the urban corridors.

PL12.3 Seek opportunities to create or enhance town squares framed by commercial or civic buildings, pocket parks, plazas and other small public or private spaces in downtown or other high-density areas.

PL14.2 Concentrate housing into three high-density Neighborhoods. Downtown Olympia; Pacific/Martin/Lilly Triangle; and the area surrounding Capital Mall. Commercial uses directly serve high-density neighborhoods and allow people to meet their daily needs without traveling outside their neighborhood. High-density neighborhoods are highly walkable. At least one-quarter of the forecasted growth shall be in downtown Olympia.

PL17.1 Adopt a Downtown Plan addressing – at minimum – housing, public spaces, parking management, rehabilitation and redevelopment, architecture and cultural resources, building skyline and views, and relationships to the Port peninsula and Capitol Campus.

PL17.2 Include public art and public spaces in the downtown landscape.

PL17.3 Through aggressive marketing and extra height, encourage intensive downtown residential and commercial development (at least 15 units and 25 employees per acre) sufficient to support frequent transit service.

PL17.4 Encourage development that caters to a regional market.

PL17.5 Coordinate with State of Washington and Port of Olympia to ensure that both the Capitol Campus plan and Port peninsula development are consistent with and support the community's vision for downtown Olympia.

PL17.6 Landscape the downtown with trees, planters and baskets, banners, community gardens and other decorative improvements.

The Downtown Plan:

The Comprehensive Plan also calls for a downtown plan to provide more detailed direction for urban design standards and other regulations to implement the city's vision for downtown. The regulations and urban design standards would be applied to new development proposed by property owners. The downtown plan could also address other related issues such as transportation, parking, brownfields remediation and sea level rise. However, a downtown plan would not reach the level of detail necessary to determine the exact use of each parcel or to design the specific buildings on those parcels.

The Council-approved Community Planning and Development Department Planning Project Work Plan lists scoping for the downtown plan commencing in January of 2015 and taking approximately 6 months. That amount of time is anticipated because of the degree of community interest in the downtown and the likelihood that the plan will not be able to address all of the topics that have been raised through the Comprehensive Planning process. There are also numerous stakeholders who have expressed interest in participating in the scoping and development of the plan. Following the scoping process, a one year planning process is anticipated starting in 2015 and extending until at least June of 2016. During this period, staff anticipates selection of a consulting team, doing the work of developing the plan and sharing this work with the public in an iterative and transparent process. The scoping process could be abbreviated if Council is willing to take the lead in this process. This would entail Council serving as the scoping committee for the plan and would necessitate a substantially abbreviated public involvement process.

Councilmembers may find examples of downtown plans from other cities helpful in considering how best to approach development of such a plan:

- The City of Bothell's [Downtown Subarea Plan](#) and Regulations. This Plan was propelled forward by the realignment of SR 527 and has resulted in several significant redevelopment projects in Bothell's downtown.
- City of Ventura California's [Downtown Specific Plan](#). This Plan also includes specific regulations related to downtown as a Form Based Code as well as a well-developed parking strategy.
- Downtown Bremerton [Subarea Plan](#). Bremerton's Downtown Plan laid out a strategic plan to implement the Comprehensive Plan.
- Racine, Wisconsin [Downtown Plan](#). Racine is a waterfront community that sought to inject new life and direction into its downtown through development of an urban design based action plan.

While each of these plans is different in their scope and focus, they all share a clear sense of purpose and vision for the future of their downtown. They recognize that community development is a multifaceted endeavor requiring the focused efforts of more than just the City to achieve real results. Staff anticipates using these and other plans to help the Council and the community understand the range of possibilities, costs and applicability of various planning approaches.

The CRA Process

Community development can occur in two ways: 1. Spontaneously – with projects generated primarily in response to market forces with limited shaping by government occurring primarily through application of development regulations; and 2. Deliberately – with adoption of a Community Renewal Area (CRA) providing additional tools that would increase the city's role in more directly influencing development of specific blighted properties to enhance commerce

downtown. This approach goes beyond development regulations and urban design standards by establishing contractual relationships between the City and development partners. For blighted properties, these partnerships will allow the city to directly negotiate the specific uses and design characteristics for redevelopment of individual properties in a way that is not possible from a strictly regulatory approach. This is not to suggest that all development in downtown will be or should be controlled by the CRA; however, CRA is a way to increase the likelihood that certain blighted properties will be returned to an economically productive life in furtherance of city objectives.

Negotiations with developers about projects on their properties can also increase the information the city has about the feasibility of different kinds of development. This information can be fed back into the downtown plan, to help ensure the vision for downtown is realistic and can be supported by the market. At the same time, the public process for the downtown plan can help the city include more detailed community objectives in its negotiations with property owners about development of specific properties. In the end the success of the downtown plan will be judged not by what gets imagined or written, but by what actually gets built.

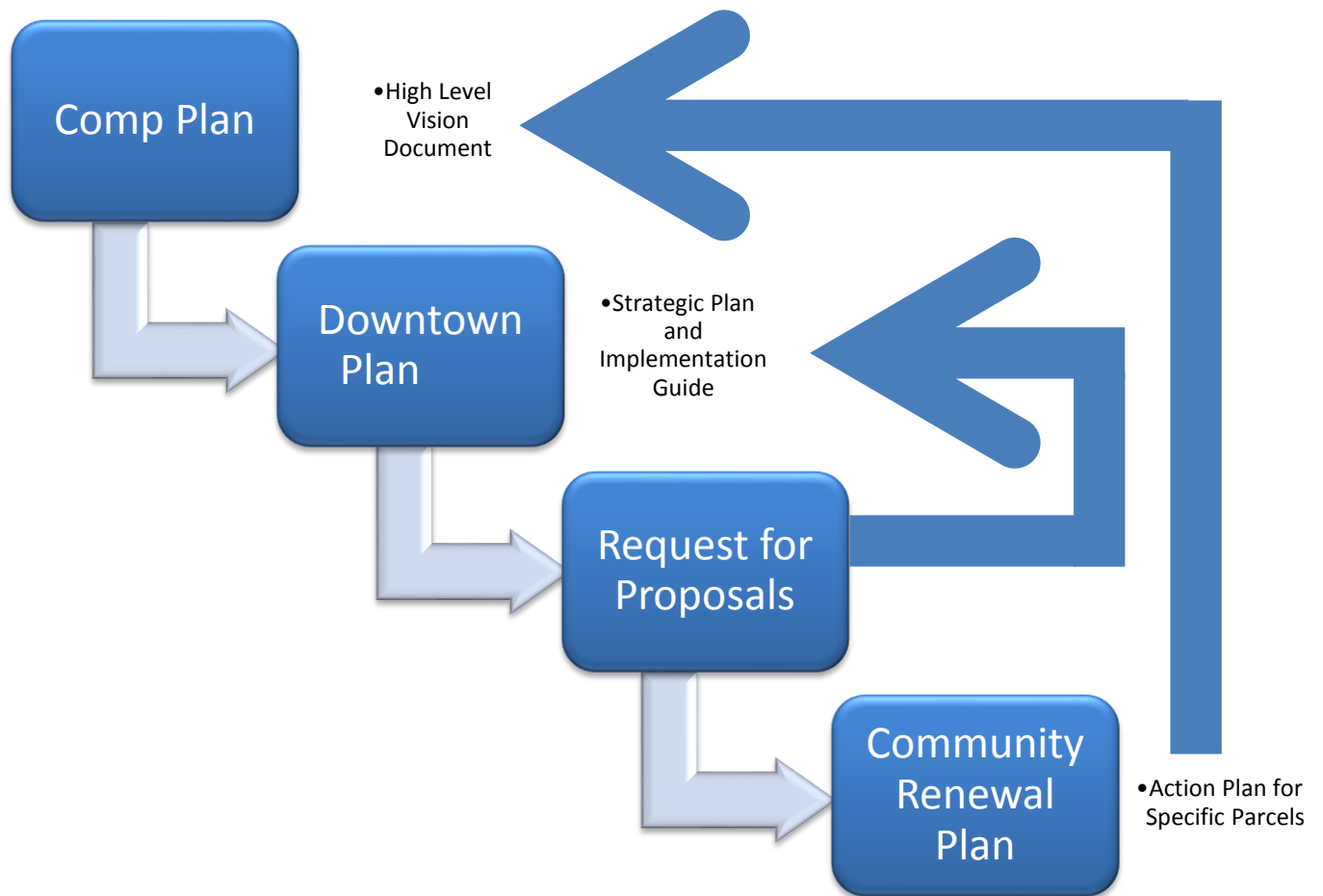
Public Participation

Public participation is an integral part of the CRA process (**City Council** involvement is found in **bold** and public participation opportunities are underlined below).

1. The first public participation opportunity would be the open house on the Community Renewal Area.
2. The next opportunity would be the **adoption by City Council** of the Community Renewal Area resolution following a public hearing.
3. This would be followed by the development of the Requests for Proposal (RFP). The RFP would detail what the city is interested in from a development perspective and what the city may offer to incent the right project proposal. This process would include an opportunity for public review of the RFP and **City Council approval** prior to release.
4. Following the RFP **approval by City Council**, a Public Finance Seminar would be conducted by the city with support from the National Development Corporation (NDC). NDC is expert in public finance and public/private partnerships and could play a critical role in helping to bring interested parties to the table and help them understand the ways that the city could assist in the process (consistent with the RFP).
5. A bidder conference would be hosted by the city shortly after the release of the RFP to answer questions and reinforce the city's invitation to partner. It is hoped that the RFP would generate interest from property owners, developers and interest groups and that they would develop specific proposals for individual properties or small areas.
6. These proposals would be reviewed by staff and the consultant team for financial feasibility and consistency with the objectives of the RFP.
7. They would be shared with the public in an open house setting.

8. Depending upon the nature of the RFP there could be subsequent more detailed evaluation of proposals to further narrow the field to those that have the highest return on investment as **determined by City Council**.
9. Following the narrowing process, a partner would be **selected by City Council** to enter into detailed negotiations with respect to specific parcels or areas.
10. The negotiation process would include detailed plans and specifications for what would be built, commitment of financial resources on the part of the city, and the partner and a timeline for moving forward. The development agreement and contract would be **approved by City Council** following an opportunity for public review.
11. The results of the RFP process would be folded into the CRA Plan and **adopted by City Council** following a public hearing.

Community Renewal Area Process Overview



It is anticipated that the Comprehensive Plan, Downtown Plan, the RFP and the CRA processes will interact and influence one another. The RFP process will give the City significant control over development not available on privately initiated projects occurring outside the CRA process. The Community Renewal Plan may require amendments to the Comprehensive Plan to be implemented.

Project Budget

The proposed revisions to the CRA process would require a change in the contract timeline, scope and budget. ECO estimates that the additional work contemplated in the revised timeline would add between \$20,000 and \$40,000 to the project budget. Additionally staff estimates that National Development Corporation's involvement in this project, administration and underwriting of the Grow Olympia Fund, Section 108 and non-CDBG related economic development support will cost approximately \$60,000 next year. Staff also anticipates continuing the EDC contract in 2015 at \$27,500. Additional legal expense may be incurred depending on the number and complexity of project specific negotiations.

CRA Budget:			
Initial Contract			\$105,000
Isthmus Process			\$50,000
Legal Support			\$50,000
Feasibility Work			\$7,500
Total CRA			\$212,500
Additional Budget ECO			\$40,000
Additional Budget Legal			TBD
Spent			
ECO			\$137,050
Legal			\$6,860
			\$143,910
Balance			\$68,590
	ECO		\$25,450
	Legal		\$43,140
CERB Grant			\$25,000
Other Eco. Dev. Related			
Additional Budget EDC			\$27,500
Additional Budget NDC			\$60,000

Council Role:

As detailed in the Public Participation section above, Council is and will remain the decision maker in this process -- neither the RFP nor the Community Renewal Area Plan will move forward without Council approval.

It is important that Council play a leadership role in this process and send a clear message that the plan that is adopted and that the proposal that is issued is fully supported by Council. The Community and Economic Revitalization Committee (CERC) has played a critical role in guiding staff and the consulting team throughout this process and this level of guidance will remain critical to the success of the process whether provided by the CERC or City Council.