



City of Olympia | Capital of Washington State

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October 29, 2012

To: Olympia City Council

From: Olympia Planning Commission

Subject: Recommendations on Long-Range Community Development Investment Plan

On June 7, 2012, the City Council (OCC) Finance Committee asked the Planning Commission (OPC) to examine whether and how a long-range community development investment plan (LCDIP) could benefit the community and to report back with recommendations. The LCDIP would be a community-developed list of priority capital projects and acquisitions that would guide city investments for the long-term, most likely 20 years. Unlike the current capital facilities element of the City's 20-year Comprehensive Plan, the LCDIP would focus on actual long-range investments rather than policies and goals related to capital investment, and it would cover a longer time frame than the six-year Capital Facilities Plan, updated annually by the City.

Based on discussion with the Council Finance Committee and an earlier conversation with the Mayor, the LCDIP 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 development goals. The plan should create the connection between City aspirations and achievements. The plan also should coordinate with neighborhood/subarea plans and consider advisory committee recommendations.

In response to the Council's request, the OPC's Finance Subcommittee discussed the LCDIP as a part of its 2012 work and presented its proposal for review and approval by the full OPC on October 15th. The OPC Finance Subcommittee discussed the LCDIP with Council members and City staff at the OCC's Finance Committee meeting on September 13th. Councilmember Langer served as the Council liaison to the OPC Finance Subcommittee and participated in the subcommittee's discussion of the LCDIP on July 30th.

Analysis

A 20-year LCDIP would provide the following benefits:

1. Educate Council on the big picture community perspective.
2. Provide Council with a context for making investment decisions on future emergent projects. An LCDIP may have provided useful context for emergent projects such as Percival Landing, the Washington Center for the Performing Arts, and the isthmus park.
3. Assure the community that the City is moving toward the long-term Comprehensive Plan vision.
4. Ensure the Comprehensive Plan is grounded in financial reality.
5. Serve as a guide for the annual update of the six-year capital facilities plan and help ensure the CFP is consistent with the City's vision and aspirations.

6. Help the City conform to the state's Growth Management Act requirement that the capital facilities element in the comprehensive plan "includes the new and expanded facilities necessary for growth over the twenty-year life of the comprehensive plan." (WAC 365-196-415 (3)(c)).
7. Indicate to individual citizens, neighborhoods, and other stakeholder groups the City's intention to fund key projects that can't be funded in the six-year CFP time frame.
8. Provide truth-in-planning for transportation impact fee projects that are listed in the 6-year CFP but can't reasonably be funded within that time frame.
9. Help realize long-range City and regional plans such as Olympia's Comprehensive Plan and Shoreline Management Plan, and the Thurston Regional Planning Council's Urban Corridors Task Force strategies and Sustainable Thurston Program recommendations.
10. Establish a common time frame for City comprehensive and capital system plans.

A 20-year LCDIP would present the following challenges:

1. Because financial, population, and other data beyond six years is very uncertain, it will be difficult to develop a financially constrained plan for 20 years.
2. Changes in behaviors, attitudes, and societal and environmental factors will affect future priorities.
3. The City will need to balance the staffing and financial resources to develop and update the plan with other important priorities.

Other LCDIP Considerations:

1. Need to determine who will develop the plan (e.g., OPC, staff, citizens committee, neighborhoods).
2. Ensure the plan includes maintenance as an essential cost item.
3. Will require Council leadership and community buy-in.
4. Whether the LCDIP will take the place of the Comprehensive Plan capital facilities element and six-year CFP or serve as an independent document that informs those GMA-required components.
5. How the plan would be integrated with subarea/neighborhood plans.
6. The role of neighborhoods in developing and implementing the plan.
7. How to make the plan consistent with those of neighboring cities, the county, special districts (e.g., LOTT), and the Thurston Regional Planning Council.

Recommendations

The City Council should consider engaging in a process to develop a long-range community development plan with substantial input from the community. The OPC recommends the following considerations regarding development of the LCDIP:

1. This effort should be undertaken when adequate financial and staff resources are available.
2. The City Council should serve as the oversight body for the plan's development.
3. An ad hoc citizen advisory committee should be convened to work with City staff to present Council with the scope, process steps, and recommendations for the plan.

4. Similar to the model Council used for selecting citizen participants for last summer's budget discussions, each Council member could be allowed to select a given number of citizens to serve on the ad hoc committee.
5. Members of the ad hoc committee should include representatives of City advisory committees, neighborhoods, community groups and other key stakeholder groups.
6. The ad hoc committee should ensure the LCDIP considers recommendations in sub-area plans called for in the July draft of the Comprehensive Plan update.
7. In addition to new capital projects, preservation of existing capital facilities should be an essential element of the plan.
8. The ad hoc committee should use input from TRPC and neighboring jurisdictions to ensure that regional plans and strategies are considered in the LCDIP recommendations.
9. The Long Term Financial Strategy (LTFS) provides the City Council and staff with key principles and guidelines for making financial choices. It was published by the City Council in December 1999 and is still used for building operating and capital budgets. We recommend that the LTFS be updated prior to development of the LCDIP, either as a deliverable of the ad hoc committee or another group. The guidance and recommendations of the LTFS would provide the ad hoc committee with an excellent foundation for its work.
10. Section 1(c) of WAC 365-196-415 requires that the capital facilities element of the Comprehensive Plan include at least a six-year financially constrained plan and section 3(c) requires that this element include new and expanded facilities necessary for growth over the 20-year life of the Comprehensive Plan. The LCDIP could be written as a guide for the meeting these six-year and 20-year GMA requirements or actually serve as a component of the capital facilities element. Both approaches have their advantages. We defer to staff, the Council, and the advice of GMA experts to determine how the LCDIP could best be used.

Conclusion

The Planning Commission thanks the City Council for the opportunity to provide recommendations on development of a long-range community development investment plan.

We will be glad to further analyze this issue in 2013.

Sincerely,



Amy Tousley
Chair, Olympia Planning Commission



Roger Horn
Chair, OPC Finance Subcommittee