

#1. POLICIES LEADING TO DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

Topic

Degree to which the Comprehensive Plan should denote development regulations as the primary means of implementation

Summary of Comments

Various members of the public commented that the proposed Plan update either too often prescribes what will be required of development; or doesn't do so often enough.

Council Direction of August 12, 2014

Although generally confirming the approach that details of regulations should be decided when development regulations are adopted by the Council and not in the Comprehensive Plan, the Council directed that a work session be scheduled to explore some of the specific issues raised by the public during the hearing.

Staff Analysis

Olympia's current Comprehensive Plan often describes specific regulations that may be used to achieve the vision described in the Plan. One of the touchstones of the scope of the "Imagine Olympia" update as directed in 2010 was that the new version of the plan should be more readable. To that end, one of the changes incorporated into the draft now being considered by Council was to make the document much shorter – in part by removing many descriptions of implementing regulations. In general, such directives regarding regulations are to become part of an "Action Plan" to be adopted after the Comprehensive Plan update.

Nonetheless, the draft Plan does continue to describe in general terms some specific instances where regulations are intended to be one of the primary means of implementing the Plan. In particular, some of the proposed policies indicate that it is the policy of the City to "require" that development be of a given form. (Other verbs, such as "support," may suggest regulations as one option for implementation, but "require" is the primary one indicating that prescriptive regulations are likely to be adopted.)

As noted above, some members of the public commented that there should be fewer or no such regulation-mandating policies, while others suggested the Plan should be more explicit regarding the use of regulations to achieve the community's vision. Few of these comments were with regard to specific policies. Rather they addressed the general tenor of the Plan.

There are about fifty such policies in the draft Plan. (See below.) Each of these was carefully considered by the staff, and evaluated by the Planning Commission. In most cases they simply carryover a policy from the current Comprehensive Plan into the new version. They generally describe minimum expectations associated with development,

in contrast with options to be encouraged or achieved through incentives. And, in general, they reaffirm support for continuing to utilize previously adopted development regulations as the primary means of implementing specific aspects of the Plan. Where such regulations are lacking, these “require” policies provide a basis for using the State Environmental Policy Act as a regulatory tool until new development regulations are adopted by the City.

Text of Public Hearing Draft

For Council’s convenience, many of the specific “require” policies are listed below. An (*) indicates a policy where the ‘requirement’ aspect is new to this version of the Comprehensive Plan. Note that some are not explicit regarding the mandatory nature of the policy, for example some say “encourage or require.” Also note the list does not include “require alleys’ policies discussed by the Council on September 16.

Alternatives

In each instance, if the Council chooses not to retain the current policy, it could choose to revise the policy. For example, changing “require” to “support” would suggest retaining the option of utilizing regulations, but less strongly call for such. In contrast, changing “require” to “encourage” would indicate the City will be moving from a mandatory approach to one of incentives, funding, or other forms of ‘encouragement.’

“Require” Policies in Draft Plan

(* = requirement is new in this version of Comprehensive Plan)

* Public Participation Policy 3.3 Give citizens, neighborhoods, and other interested parties opportunities to get involved early in land use decision-making processes. Encourage or require applicants to meet with affected community members and organizations.

Natural Environment Policy 1.8 Limit the negative impacts of development on public lands and environmental resources, and require full mitigation of impacts when they are unavoidable.

Natural Environment Policy 1.12 Require development to mitigate impacts and avoid future costs, by incorporating timely measures, such as the clean-up of prior contamination as new development and redevelopment occurs.

* Natural Environment Policy 5.4 Require prevention and treatment practices for businesses and land uses that have the potential to contaminate stormwater.

* Natural Environment Policy 5.6 Limit or prohibit uses that pose a risk to water supplies in Drinking Water (Wellhead) protection areas based on the best scientific information available and the level of risk. Require restoration of areas that have been degraded.

* Land Use Policy 1.4 Require functional and efficient development by adopting and periodically updating zoning consistent with the Future Land Use Map.

* Land Use Policy 1.5 Require new development to meet appropriate minimum standards, such as landscaping and design guidelines, stormwater and other engineering standards, and buildings codes, and address risks, such as geologically hazardous areas; and require existing development to be gradually improved to such standards.

Land Use Policy 1.8 Buffer incompatible industrial, commercial and residential uses by requiring landscaped buffers or transitional uses, such as plazas, offices, or heavily landscaped parking; use natural buffers where possible and require clustering where warranted.

Land Use Policy 1.9 Require direct and convenient pedestrian access to commercial and public buildings from streets, bus stops and parking lots, and encourage sheltered seating and other uses of vacant sections of the street edge.

Land Use Policy 1.10 In pedestrian-oriented commercial areas, require sidewalk awnings or other weather protection on new and substantially remodeled buildings.

* Land Use Policy 1.11 Require businesses along transit routes to accommodate transit use by including building entrances near bus stops or other features such as transit shelters or on-site bus access.

Land Use Policy 1.13 Require new, and encourage existing, businesses to provide bicycle parking.

Land Use Policy 6.3 Require commercial and residential buildings to face the street or a courtyard or other common area.

Land Use Policy 6.4 Require multi-family housing to incorporate architectural forms and features common to nearby housing; to include porches, balconies, bay windows and similar details; to have entries oriented to streets or a courtyard, and include accessible open space; and to be reduced in size near lower density residential districts.

Land Use Policy 6.9 Require that buildings complement and enhance their surroundings, appeal to and support pedestrian activities, and facilitate transit use.

Land Use Policy 12.5 Require site designs for commercial and public buildings that will complement nearby development and either maintain or improve the appearance of the area. This may include building designs with a defined bottom, middle, and top; appealing architectural elements such as windows, wall detailing; fountains, vendor stations; and the use of balconies, stepped back stories and pitched roofs that reduce the perceived size of the building.

Land Use Policy 12.7 Require screening of unattractive site features such as mechanical equipment and large solid waste receptacles, while maintaining good access for collection and maintenance.

Land Use Policy 12.9 Require a form of parking that retains aesthetics and minimizes pedestrian barriers and inconvenience by including screening along streets and residential areas; limits parking lots to one contiguous acre; and locates them at the rear of buildings, or, if the rear is not possible, then on the side, but with minimal street frontage.

Land Use Policy 12.10 Ensure that business signs identify the business but do not create visual clutter or dominate the character of the area; require the use of low or façade-mounted signs where possible.

Land Use Policy 16.10 Require effective, but not unreasonably expensive, building designs and landscaping to blend multi-family housing into neighborhoods.

Land Use Policy 16.11 Require that multi-family structures be located near a collector street with transit, or near an arterial street, or near a neighborhood center, and that they be designed for compatibility with adjacent lower density housing; and be 'stepped' to conform with topography.

Land Use Policy 16.12 Require a mix of single-family and multi-family structures in villages, mixed residential density districts, and apartment projects when these exceed five acres; and use a variety of housing types and setbacks to transition to adjacent single-family areas.

Land Use Policy 18.2 Require that downtown development provide active spaces, adequate sunlight and air-flow and minimize 'blank' walls at street level.

* Land Use Policy 18.3 Require development designs that favor pedestrians over cars by including awnings and rain protection that blend with historic architecture, create interest, and minimize security and safety risks; development designs should also foster cultural events, entertainment, and tourism.

Land Use Policy 20.1 Require development in established neighborhoods to be of a type, scale, orientation, and design that maintains or improves the character, aesthetic quality, and livability of the neighborhood.

* Land Use Policy 20.4 Encourage or require development and public improvements consistent with healthy and active lifestyles.

Land Use Policy 21.4 Allow neighborhood center designs that are innovative and provide variety, but that ensure compatibility with adjoining uses. Consider appropriate phasing, scale, design and exterior materials, as well as glare, noise and traffic impacts when evaluating compatibility. Require buildings with primary access directly from street sidewalks, orientation to any adjacent park or green and to any adjacent housing, and signage consistent with neighborhood character.

Land Use Policy 24.1 Require planned development sites shown on the Future Land Use Map to develop as coordinated, mixed-use projects.

Land Use Policy 24.3 Require 'master plans' for villages that encompass the entire site and specify the project phasing, street layout and design, lot arrangement, land uses, parks and open space, building orientation, environmental protection and neighborhood compatibility measures.

Land Use Policy 24.5 Require a neighborhood center, a variety of housing, connected trails, prominent open spaces, wildlife habitat, and recreation areas in each village.

Land Use Policy 24.6 Require that villages retain the natural topography and major environmental features of the site and incorporate water bodies and stormwater ponds into the design to minimize environmental degradation.

Land Use Policy 24.8 Require village integrity but provide flexibility for developers to respond to market conditions.

Land Use Policy 24.9 Limit each village to about 40 to 200 acres; require that at least 60% but allow no more than 75% of housing to be single-family units; and require at least 5% of the site be open space with at least one large usable open space for the public at the neighborhood center.

Land Use Policy 24.10 Require that 90% of village housing be within a quarter mile of the neighborhood center and a transit stop.

* Transportation Policy 1.11 Require consolidation of driveways and parking lot connectivity for adjacent commercial areas to facilitate access from one site to another without having to access the roadway.

Transportation Policy 4.8 Build new arterials, major collectors and neighborhood collectors based on the general location defined on the Transportation Maps in Appendix B. Require the use of the Engineering Design and Development Standards.

Transportation Policy 4.10 Require new developments to connect to the existing street network and provide for future street connections to ensure the gridded street system is built concurrent with development.

* Transportation Policy 5.2 Require new developments to provide direct bicycle and pedestrian pathways that connect to adjacent, developed properties. These will be at the same interval spacing as street PT8.1 Require mitigation for new developments so that transportation level of service does not fall below adopted standards, except where policies allow.

Transportation Policy 8.2 Require new development to construct improvements or contribute funds towards measures that will improve the function and safety of the streets, such as installing bike and pedestrian improvements, turn pockets or special lanes for buses, or roundabouts, or modifying traffic signals.spacing requirements or at closer intervals. PT16.6Integrate transit and bicycle network planning and require bicycle end-of-trip facilities, such as bike parking, along bus corridors.

* Transportation Policy 17.5 Require developers to provide facilities that help transit riders easily walk or bike to and from stops, such as shelters, awnings, bike parking, walkways, benches, and lighting.

Transportation Policy 20.7 Require direct, safe, and convenient pedestrian access to commercial and public buildings from sidewalks, parking lots, bus stops, and adjacent buildings.

Transportation Policy 23.4 Require continuous awnings over the sidewalk along building frontages in densely-developed areas to protect pedestrians from weather; encourage them everywhere else.

Transportation Policy 24.8 Require new commercial developments, public facilities, schools, and multi-family housing to provide end-of-trip facilities for bicyclists, including covered bike racks and lockers.

* Transportation Policy 25.11 Require end-of-trip facilities, such as clothes lockers, showers and bike parking for walking, biking and transit users at schools and worksites.

Transportation Policy 28.3 Encourage property owners to voluntarily maintain their sidewalks and planter strips or, in some cases, require them to do so by enforcing codes.

Utility Policy 1.1 Require annexation of all properties for which new City wastewater or drinking water services are requested if the property is outside the City, but inside the Urban Growth Area. Or, require property owners to sign a Binding Agreement to Annex when requested by the City.

Utility Policy 1.2 Require new developments to construct drinking water, wastewater and stormwater utilities in ways that meet the community development, environmental protection, and resource protection goals of this Plan, and that are consistent with adopted utility plans and extension policies.

Utility Policy 2.1 Ensure that new development projects pay for their own utility infrastructure based on their expected needs for the next 20 years. Also require them to contribute to their portion of existing infrastructure. Routinely review new-development charges (such as general facility charges) when updating utility master plans, or more frequently as needed.

Utility Policy 7.8 Require private water purveyors that build new systems within Olympia's water service area to build to Olympia's standards so the systems can be integrated in the future.

Utility Policy 8.6 Require the conversion of septic systems to the City-owned wastewater collection system upon septic system failure or building use change, whenever feasible.

Utility Policy 11.8 Require development to incorporate measures, such as higher finished floor elevations, that will reduce risks and avoid future costs associated with rising sea levels; and to encourage acknowledgment of such risks by state and federal agencies.