

Public Testimony – Feb 27, 2017

Ms. Buckler presented a short briefing and noted written public comment will be accepted until Friday, March 3, 2017 at 5:00 p.m.

Chair Mark opened the public hearing.

Public testimony was received from:

Stewart Drebeck, a local developer, stated he felt the document was a good one which can help to create the vision, and he commended staff for their work during this process. His concerns were:

- Housing Chapter, Page 1, second sentence- *The City's Comprehensive Plan includes a target of directing ¼ of the city's forecasted population growth into downtown. This translates into about 5,000 new downtown residents living in approximately 2,500 to 3,500 new residences over next 20 years.* Concerned about the word "directing" and feels it should not become a mandate by the City. He feels the expectation of building 150 housing units per year over the next 20 years is overly optimistic and the market will not bear it. Multifamily is a cyclical industry that overbuilds then stops because the banks won't lend. There is too much available land elsewhere that is far less expensive than Downtown.
- Housing Chapter, Page 3 - *Avoid displacement of lower income groups from the downtown.* Concerned about the City mandating owners of existing lower income rentals from remodeling these units and raising the rent.
- Housing Chapter, Page 4 - He feels the example of a potential quarter block development is not realistic. It's too big for anyone to take on.
- Housing Chapter, Page 11 - Concerned that the costs associated with rehabilitation or demolition of existing buildings make this not a realistic option.
- Concerned about how Olympia might implement its goal of maintaining affordable units. He does not want to see the City implement rent control. That would be bad for the community and bad for people that own real estate.

Bonnie Jacobs, a long-time Olympia resident, referenced written testimony from the Friends of the Waterfront organization. She praised the Planning Commission for their service, and stressed the importance of the waterfront as a treasured community asset. Their concerns are:

- View protection from the waterfront. When planning for more visitors and for 5,000 more residents, think about views and setbacks from the waterfront.
- The Shoreline Master Program minimum 30-foot setback is insufficient for a pathway and the setback distance should be increased.

Aaron Sauerhoff, a student at Evergreen State College, thanked everyone who put the thoughtful and thorough plan together. He is concerned about collaboration with experts who have the most current data regarding sea level rise and urged the

importance of not missing any available data when implementing the Downtown Strategy.

Joel Baxter, a representative from the Olympia Master Builders, feels the plan is mostly easy to read and understand and will be a good tool for citizen involvement. While OMB members do not often build in downtown, they wanted to weigh in on the DTS because they care of the vitality of downtown and believe it is important to the region. His concerns are:

- The DTS outlines a priority of walkability and the desire to add 5,000 residents to Downtown. He feels the current restrictions on building height may create a challenge of obtaining the goal of increasing housing units. OMB does not want to eliminate views, but housing goals as well as walkability can only be supported by increasing density.
- When considering affordable housing incentives an actual affordable housing dollar amount needs to be established in order to determine if a developer can meet this goal of supplying affordable units.

Bob Jacobs, a long time Olympia resident, referenced written testimony from the Friends of the Waterfront (FOW) organization. Two themes he sees are holistic and long-term. Different interests have to be balanced in order to have a healthy community, and we need to prepare for growth, for example by setting aside park land and putting view protections in place. He reiterated the following concerns of FOW:

- The Shoreline Master Program minimum 30-foot setback is insufficient for a pathway and the setback distance should be increased. Only 20' of that is flat land. 55' would be better for trail users and private businesses (e.g. for outdoor seating.)
- Appreciate the recommendations to get people to the waterfront – think about the experience people have when they get there
- View protection - the draft recommends the Capitol Dome view be defined as only the Capitol Dome, not including the Drum. FOW thinks both the Dome and Drum are important to the view. (the draft also includes a typo that states the recommended view is the Capitol “Drum” – intended to be Capitol “Dome”)
- Isthmus – urges that the DTS should include a recommendation to remove the Capitol Center Building from the isthmus and replace it with a grand public open space.

Chair Mark closed the public hearing.