

Olympia  
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Jonathan -

Thank you for a concise, well organized presentation to the Planning Commission last evening and for your informed response to questions. I submit this follow-up to your presentation and responses as an individual resident of Olympia and not as a member of the Planning Commission. These comments do not represent the position of the Commission nor of any other members of the Commission.

I acknowledge the extensive outreach program the City has conducted in the formulation of the draft Parks, Arts, and Recreation Plan. However, I am concerned that the procedures and comment period on the actual draft appear less accommodating of public involvement. I appreciate the need to have a final plan in place in order to apply for grants to fund projects in the Plan. Given the limited opportunity for comment on this draft, it would be useful to lay out subsequent opportunities for public comment on further iterations of the Plan.

As I indicated last night, my primary concern with the draft Plan is the potential effect of the proposed major land acquisitions on the goals and policies in the Comprehensive Plan that argue for a compact city with densities sufficient for increased transit, improved "walkability", and reduced pressure for urban sprawl into rural areas. I see no inherent conflict between increased parkland within the City and the density objectives articulated in the Comprehensive Plan. I believe that specific policies and actions by the City are required to assure that the residential development previously planned for the lands now proposed for acquisition for parks actually occur in the City. I realize formulation and implementation of such policies and actions is outside of direct jurisdiction of the Parks, Arts, and Recreation Department. I will communicate this concern to the Planning Department but I note it for your information.

Given the policies in the Comprehensive Plan for a compact and "walkable" city and the current City work on a downtown strategy, I urge that the draft Plan be revised to provide for parks smaller than what I understand to be the proposed minimal size of five acres. It is extremely important that there be small parks located within a convenient distance from those areas of the City most likely to develop in a denser pattern. These areas obviously include the downtown and the other two high density nodes. It should also include those corridors designed as "high density corridors" and actual or potential neighborhood centers. To facilitate such planning, I strongly suggest that vacant parcels

in the City be identified and evaluated for their potential as small neighborhood parks, i.e. “pocket parks.”

As stated above, a major goal in the Comprehensive Plan is to make the City more conducive to walking and to biking. In part, this requires higher densities that can support walking and biking destinations closer to where people live. But in part, it requires improved walking and biking infrastructure. Given the importance of walking and biking to public health and to meeting recreational needs of the public, I suggest the draft Plan acknowledge the role of walking and biking in meeting recreational needs, explain the division of responsibility between the Parks Department and the Public Works Department for pedestrian and bike facilities, and work to assure all current and future parks can be accessed by walking or biking.

The intent in the draft Plan to acquire ample park and recreation plan is laudable. The desire to acquire potential park land most “threatened” by alternative development is laudable. However, the draft Plan appears to be attempting to “ride two horses at once” - a difficult feat. This needs to be acknowledged and an acceptable compromise articulated.

Several specific concerns and questions follow.

1. If the land purchase on the “Isthmus” is not devoted exclusively to park use, will some or all of the funds provided by the County be returned? If so, how will this affect the overall budget?
2. Spending for Percival Landing construction and for West Bay Park expansion is noted (p. 82; p. 83). Mention of the “Big W” is made later in the Plan (p. 96). However, there does not appear to be provision for the other portions of a potential “Big W” facility. The “Big W” could be a major park asset, as indicated during the Shoreline Master Planning process.
3. The Garfield Nature Trail is a park gem (p 85). Has any consideration been given to expansion of the trail to the west to the site of the current pocket park at Madison and Thomas?
4. The discussion of the Woodland Trail does not mention possible use of impact fees to fund a portion of the trail. (p. 86) Based on discussion last evening, the proposed motels adjacent to the trail do not pay park impact fees. I believe this is a major mistake. The proposed construction imposes significant costs to the City and, most importantly, to adjacent residents in the form of noise, light, traffic, and loss of natural habitat. Therefore, I believe the Park Department should recommend that the Council give consideration to revising impact fee policies to provide for compensation in the form of park facilities from these and other commercial developments that are adjacent to park facilities.

5. The draft Plan proposes an “Arts Center” in 2022 (p. 90). The relation of such a center to a proposed “Art Space” that would provide for both artists residential needs and workshop and display space should be clarified in the draft Plan.
6. The matrix of revenue sources for capital projects should clarify that the funding shown for the recently passed Metropolitan Park District is based on an assumption regarding the actual bond that will be proposed by the Board of the Parks District (p. 109).

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on an impressive draft Parks Plan.

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