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Olympia Planning Commission

City of Olympia
601 4th Ave E
Olympia, WA 98501

RE: Comments on Olympia 2045 – Proposed Code Amendments

Dear Chair and Commissioners,

On behalf of Olympia Master Builders (OMB) and our 500+ member companies, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed development regulation amendments associated with the Olympia 2045 Comprehensive Plan periodic update.

We recognize that many of these changes are required by state law under the Growth Management Act (GMA). However, several amendments raise potential concerns for housing feasibility, predictability in permitting, and overall land-use flexibility. As Olympia continues to face significant housing affordability challenges, it is critical that code changes balance compliance with state law while ensuring the City remains a partner in expanding attainable housing opportunities.

Attached please find our detailed comments and recommendations on specific sections of the proposed amendments.

For further information or questions please contact Government Affairs Director, Jessie Simmons, at ga@omb.org or (360)754-0912 ext. 102.

Respectfully,

Jessie Simmons
Government Affairs Director
Olympia Master Builders

Attachment A – Olympia Master Builders Comments & Recommendations

Olympia 2045 – Proposed Code Amendments

Resource Lands Notification (Titles 17 & 18)

- **Issue:** Requires notices on plats/permits within 500 feet of resource lands.
- **Impact:** While aligned with state law, duplicative or overly broad notice language may discourage housing investment.
- **Recommendation:** Ensure notice language is factual, neutral, and consistent with RCW 36.70A.060 to avoid stigmatizing properties.

Essential Public Facilities Definition (Title 18.02.180)

- **Issue:** Expands local definition to include broad reference to RCW 36.70A.200.
- **Impact:** May inadvertently broaden siting conflicts or create uncertainty in local permitting.
- **Recommendation:** Retain alignment with state law but clarify that local permitting will not add requirements beyond RCW.

Organic Materials Management Facilities (Title 18.08.040)

- **Issue:** Allows siting of OM facilities by conditional use in industrial zones.
- **Impact:** Though state-required, poorly defined siting standards could create land-use conflicts or disincentivize adjacent housing.
- **Recommendation:** Clarify siting criteria and require compatibility analysis with residential uses.

Development Activity Definition (Title 15.04.020)

- **Issue:** Updates definition to exempt low-income/emergency housing consistent with RCW 82.02.090.
- **Impact:** Positive for housing but requires clarity to avoid unintended exemptions.
- **Recommendation:** Provide implementation guidance to ensure consistent application in permitting.

Concurrency & Highways of Statewide Significance (Title 15.20.030)

- **Issue:** Exempts HSS facilities from concurrency.
- **Impact:** Could shift mitigation burdens entirely to local developments.
- **Recommendation:** Add policy language requiring the City to advocate for state investment in parallel to concurrency exemptions.

Tribal Participation (Title 18.59.080)

- **Issue:** Adds tribal participation requirements for comp plan amendments.
- **Impact:** Important for equity and consultation, but scope and timelines are undefined.
- **Recommendation:** Establish clear engagement timelines and ensure tribal participation aligns with statutory requirements without delaying housing projects.

Neighborhood Centers & FLUM Consistency (Titles 18.06.020 & 18.59.055)

- **Issue:** Tightens consistency requirements between zoning and FLUM.
- **Impact:** May reduce flexibility for housing development near neighborhood centers.
- **Recommendation:** Provide allowances for zoning adjustments where needed to meet housing capacity targets.