

To: The Olympia City Council
From: The Olympia Heritage Commission
Date: November 30, 2016
RE: Downtown Strategy Draft Recommendations on Heritage

In its role as steward of Olympia's historic environment, the Heritage Commission has engaged in public outreach programs and reviewed the resulting Downtown Strategy Recommended Actions. Downtown Olympia includes hundreds of historic buildings and spaces that are major contributors to the sense of place within our community's commercial center. The Commission supports striking a balance between preserving Downtown's historical character and constructing compatible, well-designed buildings and spaces to meet current and future needs. With this in mind, the Commission makes the following recommendations on specific draft actions:

LU.1: *Form a Sea level Response (SLR) Plan.*

This needs to include consideration of heritage resources, including the built environment and archaeology.

LU.5: *Identify buildings and tools appropriate for adaptive reuse, and promote these tools.*

LU.6: *Promote incentives and other tools that encourage private investment.*

LU.6.B: *Explore – Program to offer façade improvement grants or loans.*

The toolbox for adaptive reuse, private investment, and façade improvements needs to be sensitive to and promote the enhancement of the historic context of downtown Olympia. Two tools already in use but underutilized for building rehabilitation are Federal and State preservation tax incentives. The upcoming historic architectural survey can provide baseline information for these actions.

LU.6A: *Establish Downtown as an urban infill exemption area for SEPA.*

Because SEPA includes important provisions for the review of potentially significant heritage resources and consultation with affected Tribes, this proposal must address the loss of this opportunity to review potential impacts and conduct meaningful Tribal consultation as required by State and Federal law.

D.1: *Update design guidelines (includes view protection updates, based on 2016 views analysis).*

For those properties designated individually on the Register or located within a historic district, the Commission recommends replacing the design guidelines with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (Standards; see reverse). The Standards are already adopted under OMC 18.12 and used as the main standards for design review of building permit applications for all designated historic properties everywhere else in the city. While they are also referred to in design review Downtown, other design standards conflict with the Standards and dominate decision-making. Using the Standards for Downtown's designated historic properties would unify the City's practice of managing change in its historic environment. It would also reduce developer uncertainty by eliminating the use of multiple sets of regulations.

D.3: *Inventory historic architecture in Downtown.*

The information gathered in this survey will provide a baseline of information on the historical development and current condition of all buildings in our commercial core. This will assist the City's efforts in identifying significant historical design patterns to develop guidance that encourages compatible new design. It will also serve as a catalyst for identifying new tools and approaches for promoting and investing in Downtown. Grant funding for this study has already been secured and a consultant selected.

D.6: *Examine potential expansion of historic district boundary and/or designation of additional historic properties.*

The existing boundaries are narrow and do not accurately reflect the location of our historic downtown. The expansion of the district and individual designation would support the preservation and enhancement of the unique character enjoyed by Olympia residents, businesses and tourists. It would also allow us to expand our promotion of incentive programs, further encouraging private investment in the development of Downtown.

The City Council's vision for a vibrant Downtown is one we share. Thank you for your recognition of the role our ever-evolving historic environment plays in our economic vitality and community identity.

Respectfully,



Holly Davies

Chair, Olympia Heritage Commission

U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.