

Olympia Planning Commission

October 4, 2021

Olympia City Council
PO Box 1967 Olympia
WA 98507-1967

Dear Councilmembers:

SUBJECT: Preliminary 2022-2027 CFP Recommendations

The Olympia Planning Commission appointed a Capital Facilities Plan Subcommittee to review the 2022-2027 Capital Facilities Plan for consistency with Olympia's Comprehensive Plan.

We would like to recognize the City of Olympia staff for consistently striving to improve the content, layout, and accuracy of the CFP. This year they added information about debt servicing which was responsive to previous comments by the OPC.

A common refrain on budgeting is that 'your budget is your values'. We have noticed that despite efforts of staff there has been little public involvement or interest in the CFP document over the years. We recognize that this document builds upon planning efforts such as the transportation master plan that included public involvement, so that involvement is to some extent 'baked in' to the projects and recommendations. Regardless, we believe that additional engagement on the CFP itself would help us assure that Olympia is investing in its values.

Olympia's comprehensive plan's Community Values and Vision section describes Olympias values on public participation like this:

Olympians value their right to participate in City government, and to engage in a meaningful, open, and respectful community dialogue regarding decisions that affect our community.

We believe that there are opportunities to advance this community value through the capital facilities planning process by making the values advanced by investments in the CFP more accessible. For example, Olympians expressed their transportation vision as '*complete streets that move people, not just cars*'. It is difficult to read the CFP and understand the extent to which we are advancing that value versus investing in the status quo. We believe that we can increase community engagement with the CFP by continuing to improve the links between the

CFP and the plans that shape it. We hope that making this linkage would allow residents reading the plan to understand what values we are investing in and aid in a level of engagement that other documents the OPC reviews have.

Although it is not part of the comprehensive plan Olympia has committed to:

'Continuing to learn and take action to dismantle all forms of oppression within our City government and its operations by lifting up and including the voices of our marginalized community members in decision making...'

Investments in projects across City government are clear opportunities to operationalize this value. There are a variety of ways in which the city is advancing their DEI values, for example through efforts to have a more equitable contracting process, but it is not evident in reading the CFP where we are advancing this value and where we have more room to grow.

Over the last two years the CFP has included a list of comprehensive plan goals that are being advanced in each chapter. This is a good step towards identifying how we are advancing these values, but they are detached from specific projects or dollar amounts and can be difficult to contextualize for even an experienced CFP reader.

In the pursuit of transparency, we also believe the City could do a better job of connecting the CFP to Operating Budgets and the impacts the two budgeting documents have on each other. We appreciate that this is a stated consideration of the budgeting process but could be more specific. For example, the City's purchase of a second street sweeper to decrease run off pollution is exciting, however it is unclear what impacts a second street sweeper will have on the operating budget once the grant funding ends.

In addition, though it is noted in transportation planning, it is unclear in the CFP that current investments in maintenance are not sufficient to maintain the road system in good condition and that there is the potential for decline to levels that require more costly reconstruction rather than repair. Tracking the condition of our infrastructure is laudable but we need to clearly connect our investments to whether or not we are succeeding at our goals.

The Commission encourages the City Council to continue to consider these documents, and how their focus might change, in light of the recently adopted Transportation Master Plan and Climate Mitigation Plan. These plans will have impacts to our community and budgets for years to come and the investments detailed in the CFP will be critical in meeting our goals.

The Olympia Planning Commission recommends adoption of the 2022-2027 CFP and applauds the efforts of staff to continue to improve the content and readability of the document.

We believe that to better engage Olympians on the content of the CFP we need to more clearly communicate how we are succeeding or failing to invest in our values. We believe that this will

benefit not just residents but also help city staff and officials see the extent to which we are or are not investing in the future we have envisioned for our city.

Best,

Rad Cunningham
Chair, Finance Subcommittee

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