



June 18, 2013

Olympia City Council
PO Box 1967
Olympia, WA 98507-1967

Dear Council Members:

SUBJECT: Utility Advisory Committee (UAC) Comments on Draft Comprehensive Plan

As you look forward to deliberating on the most recent version of the new Comprehensive Plan, the UAC would like to repeat and clarify a policy recommendation which we expressed in a couple of letters earlier in this process.

As we put it in our August 3rd, 2012 letter to the Planning Commission, we think the City needs to:

Increase the effectiveness of environmental investments by using an integrated City-wide framework to compare and prioritize the relative costs and benefits of proposed projects in different departments' budget areas.

The basic idea is pretty straight-forward. When the City decides to make an investment toward its environmental goals, say to make the new City Hall meet LEED gold standards rather than silver ones, we should have a process in place to think about whether or not more would be accomplished environmentally by spending the money in other ways - say on low income weatherization programs, or on stream conservation programs, or on residential street trees. At this point, these decisions are made on a piece-meal, department by department basis, without any comparative analysis. We need a process to bring a whole systems perspective to bear on our environmental investments.

Unfortunately, we think that several rounds of composition by committee have rather obscured our point. For one thing, in the final draft that's being forwarded from the Planning Commission for your consideration, it has ended up in the Introduction as a "Key Challenge" rather than in the document itself, as a goal implemented by policy statements, where it was in earlier drafts. We think a policy is something the City actually intends to do, and has a certain amount of legal weight; we think a "key challenge" in the introduction, described as one of the "influences that presents both challenges and opportunities," is a long way from planning to do something about this issue.

We also think that saying "The City needs to make investments based on an integrated framework that compares lifecycle costs and benefits of **all** City investments..." [our emphasis] has become so general that it's hard to imagine any practical or analytic way of implementing it.

We hope you will move this idea back to the level of an actual City policy in the new Comprehensive Plan, and find a more focused and pointed way of expressing it, like our August 3rd version.

Sincerely,



THAD CURTZ
Chair
Utility Advisory Committee

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cc:

Olympia Planning Commission
UAC Members
Liz Hoenig, Senior Planner
Clark Halvorson, Director of Water Resources
Rich Hoey, P.E., Public Works Director