

SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER, 2015

Step 1 Summary

OLYMPIA DOWNTOWN STRATEGY

Step 1 involved starting up the project, reviewing background information, and initial public engagement activities. Specific events and tasks are outlined below.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

The team participated in or developed the following to get everyone up to speed on downtown issues:

- **October 23, 2015 Technical Team Meeting.** The consultant team and City staff met to share information about downtown and the project's process.
- **October 23, 2015 Walk-About Tour.** The MAKERS team participated in a City staff-organized all-day tour of downtown, which included stops along alleys, the Artesian Well, Percival Landing, Sylvester Park, historic buildings, the retail core, murals, the southeast neighborhoods, Capitol Way, the Isthmus, the Farmers Market, and Port and East Bay areas. City staff described specific issues along the way.
- **Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies Summary.** The MAKERS team reviewed the Comprehensive Plan for goals and policies relevant to downtown. These policies provide the overarching guidance for any downtown efforts.
- **Preliminary Market Analysis.** Greg Easton, Property Counselors, presented his early findings at Public Workshop 1. These are summarized on page 5.
- **Realities and Perceptions of Downtown Public Safety.** Peter Steinbreuck, Steinbreuck Urban Strategies, explored crime data, perceptions presented on the Olyspeaks online discussion, and information from the Olympia Police Department to better understand the realities versus perceptions of downtown crime. He presented this information at Workshop 1, and the summary is on page 5.



Walk-About Tour with consultant team and City staff

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The team engaged community members through a variety of means:



Informal meet-and-greet with Stakeholder Work Group



At Public Workshop 1, small groups completed a variety of mapping exercises to state their preferences for downtown's future.

- **Stakeholder Work Group (SWG) Kickoff.** The consultant team and SWG held an informal meet-and-greet to learn about each other's backgrounds and interests in the project.
- **November 4, 2015 SWG Meeting.** The SWG tested out potential activities for Workshop 1. Their feedback was critical for developing activities that would be quickly understandable, run smoothly, and garner useful information to lead to alternative concepts for downtown. Through these activities, the SWG provided ideas on areas with distinct character downtown, or "districts."
- **November 21, 2015 Public Workshop 1.** This event and its results are summarized on the following pages. Its purpose was to collect community members' ideas and priorities for downtown regarding character, street improvements, residential growth, and prioritization of certain views. This provided the concepts for the consultant team to explore in Step 2.
- **Olyspeaks Online Discussion.** SWG input indicated that an issue rising to the forefront was the perception of public safety downtown. To hone understanding, the team offered an online discussion on the topic, and Peter Steinbreuck presented a response at Workshop 1.
- **Online Survey 1 (ongoing analysis).** With 2,700 responses, the online survey was a huge success in gathering broad input. As a way for people not able to attend the workshop to engage in the project, it covered many of the same topics as Workshop 1. Thus, some of its results are integrated in the Workshop 1 Results on the following pages.

STEP 2 ACTIVITIES

(December - February)

The following events occurred or are upcoming as part of Step 2 and are not summarized in this document:

- December 2, 2015 Stakeholder Work Group Meeting,
- December 11, 2015 Technical Team Meeting,
- January 6, 2016 Stakeholder Work Group,
- Targeted stakeholder meetings (e.g., local architect, social service and affordable housing providers, Port, real estate developers),
- February 3, 2016 Stakeholder Work Group, and
- February 20, 2016 Public Workshop 2.

NOVEMBER 21, 2015

Workshop 1 Results

SUMMARY

Over 100 people, many of whom were new to Olympia public engagement, participated in Workshop 1. City Councilmember Steven Langer kicked off the workshop, followed by introductions from the consultant team and an overview of the Downtown Strategy process from City staff.

The workshop included a variety of activities to garner ideas and priorities, as well as some presentations to provide useful information. The highly engaged and productive small groups provided meaningful results to help guide the process. Activities included:

- Downtown treasures: Identification of most popular assets,
- Downtown districts: Characterization of distinct downtown areas,
- Streets location and character: Prioritization of streets for improvements and preferences on their character,
- Residential intensity: Preferences on how and where to accommodate expected downtown population growth,
- Building character and location: Preferences on the look and feel of future development for different geographic areas, and
- View protection: Prioritization of views for protection.

Presentations included a preliminary economic market analysis and a look at the realities and perceptions of downtown safety. The activities and presentations are summarized on the following pages.

Many of the Workshop 1 activities informed the Online Survey 1 questions. Related Online Survey 1 results are noted where appropriate. Note, much of Online Survey 1 is currently undergoing analysis.



Small groups show preferences for future residential growth and character.



A completed map shows the group's "districts," or areas with distinct character, preferred locations for future residential growth (orange blocks), street types, and photos of desired building character.



Participants identify the views most important to them.

MAJOR THEMES

Each group provided a one sentence summary of the major ideas driving their decision-making for the mapping exercises. Themes included the following:

1. Encourage a safe and family friendly downtown with youth recreation opportunities.
2. Consider environmental issues like liquefaction and sea level rise. Encourage environmentally friendly design (e.g., green building).
3. Preserve downtown's historic character and assets.
4. Maintain Olympia's unique identity.
5. Preserve existing diversity and encourage more diversity (e.g., multigenerational, mix of incomes). Ensure Olympia remains inclusive.
6. Increase transitional, low income, and affordable housing.
7. Honor and emphasize the waterfront.
8. Focus on water—artesian wells, estuary, Capitol Lake.
9. Showcase the natural landscape and preserve views that celebrate the region's beauty.
10. Encourage population density.
11. Encourage taller buildings.
12. Encourage inviting, pedestrian friendly, people-oriented, human-scaled, vibrant places.
13. Encourage a mix of land uses (residential, retail, commercial, light industrial, entertainment, etc.) in close walking distance to provide opportunities for a livable downtown and sustainable lifestyle.
14. Emphasize the strong retail core.
15. Develop districts with distinct personalities.
16. Ensure quality and enduring development with attention to architectural design.
17. Integrate and preserve public open spaces parks.
18. Integrate social services.
19. Support safe, comfortable multimodal (bicycle, pedestrian, and vehicular) transportation options that connect homes, jobs, services, treasures, and parks/ open spaces.

20. Connect downtown and the Capitol Campus.
21. Identify safe biking routes.
22. Champion Olympia's arts and entertainment.
23. Focus on economic viability and support the local economy.

Online Survey 1 Integration: Guiding Themes

The above themes were condensed and simplified to develop Online Survey #1's first question. **Community members demonstrated a strong preference to prioritize the following** (listed in order from highest to lowest rated):

1. The waterfront and natural setting (over half of respondents rated this with the highest rating "very important"),
2. A family-friendly atmosphere (again, over half rated this as "very important"),
3. Pedestrian and people-oriented public spaces (received an average rating of "important"),
4. A more walkable lifestyle, i.e., meet day-to-day retail needs close to home or work (received an average rating of "important"),
5. A vibrant, diverse economic center,
6. Environmentally conscious building and site design, i.e., addressing energy efficiency, sea level rise, and liquefaction risks,
7. Historic character preservation,
8. A diversity of housing types for different incomes and stages in life, and
9. Safe and comfortable bicycle routes and connections.

The following themes received average ratings of "somewhat important" and had less than one third of respondents rating it as "very important":

10. Retaining unique character, i.e., culturally diverse, artistic, funky,
11. Quick and convenient vehicle connection from east to west Olympia,
12. Regional destination for arts and culture,
13. Social services availability,
14. Greatly increased number of residential units,
15. Identifiable districts, i.e., meet day-to-day retail needs close to home or work.

PRESENTATIONS

DOWNTOWN'S UNIQUE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Greg Easton, Property Counselors

Greg Easton provided a preliminary economic market analysis. Economic features of downtown include the following:

- Unique natural, historic, and cultural features attract residents and employers.
- Downtown has a stable employment base.
- Downtown is an attractive location for a mix of higher density housing opportunities.
- Downtown serves a regional trade area with a concentration of eating/drinking, entertainment, and lifestyle businesses.
- Downtown is a prime location for finance and professional office users and state government-related businesses.
- Downtown has various activity generators that would support a range of lodging options.

This analysis continued into Step 2, and further results will be presented in the Step 2 summary.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Peter Steinbreuck, Steinbreuck Urban Strategies

Peter Steinbreuck responded to SWG and Olyspeaks Online Discussion concerns over the perception of downtown as unsafe, including the following:

- The appearance of downtown matters and perceptions are important, however, Olympia Police Department crime statistics show that downtown is a relatively safe neighborhood.
- Many strategies (e.g., social services, Downtown Ambassadors, community policing, alley lighting, etc.) are already underway.
- The Olyspeaks discussion reflected concerns over behavioral and social conditions; there was little mention of actual criminal activities. Many respondents stated that homelessness should not be demonized, and that downtown needs a continued and expanded social safety net. Problematic issues raised include those of excessive after hours drinking and the presence of anarchists, skinheads, and neo-Nazis.



The consultant team presents on specific issues at Workshop 1.

- The Thurston Economic Development Council’s (EDC) recent survey showed that most downtown businesses are growing. However, the greatest concerns raised were over the perception of downtown as unsafe, homelessness, drug use, and cleanliness.
- Approaches to making urban public spaces safe and inviting for all include proactive policing and community partnerships, crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED), good urban design and place-making, high residential densities to provide “eyes on the street,” city activities to maintain and activate public spaces, and a strong social safety net and support services.

DOWNTOWN TREASURES



Small group exercise treasures mapping results. Red stars represent participants’ favorite downtown assets.

Small group participants placed stars on their map to represent the five places downtown they treasure most. Red stars on the map (at left) represent the compiled results for all the groups.

The most popular assets were:

1. The Olympia Farmers Market,
2. Percival Landing,
3. Hands On Children’s Museum,
4. Heritage Park and Fountain, and
5. The Artesian Commons.

Others included Sylvester Park, various historic or retail buildings in the downtown core, the theater and arts centers, the InterCity Transit Center, and the Olympia Timberland Library. As important places to the community, the Downtown Strategy should protect the functionality of these assets, take cues for authentic character from them, and connect them for a coherent and cohesive downtown.

Online Survey 1 Integration

When asked to choose their three favorite downtown treasures, similarly to the Workshop 1 participants, respondents most often selected (in order from most to least popular):

1. Farmers Market (82% selected this),
2. Percival Landing (65% selected this),
3. Washington Center for Performing Arts,
4. Retail core, and
5. Hands On Children’s Museum.

The other options were selected by less than 20% of respondents, although none were selected less than 6% of the time.

DOWNTOWN DISTRICTS

Each group circled and described geographic areas they thought had distinct characters or functions to give the consultant team a better understanding of existing and potential “districts” downtown. The maps to the right show all the groups’ districts overlaid and a simplified interpretation of the results. The proposed districts (below) are useful for understanding unique goals and challenges for different parts of downtown.

All of the groups’ completed maps are available in the document titled “Districts Mapping Exercise Results.”

Online Survey 1 Integration

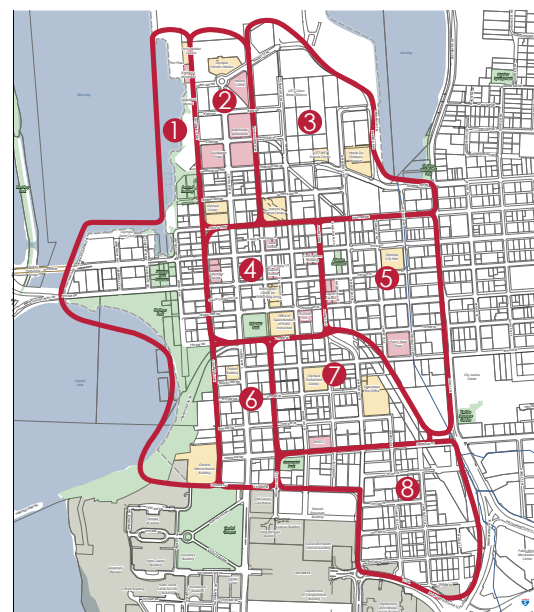
The online survey asked participants for their thoughts on the compiled districts map from Workshop 1. Three quarters of respondents thought that the proposed districts map generally matched their impression of distinct areas in downtown. Initial analysis of the qualitative responses shows that many thought too many distinct districts were shown.

The following descriptions of each district, presented in the survey, were drawn from Workshop 1 results and combined with background information:

- Area #1 is waterfront and maritime-oriented, including vibrant public spaces with access to the water and landmark views. This is a gathering place for public activity and events with inviting pedestrian connections to the historic shopping district, Farmers Market and Capitol Campus. **Strong agreement on this area’s description.*
- Area #2 includes a pedestrian-oriented streetscape with a well-designed blend of mixed income housing, retail, entertainment, and hospitality that draws people from the downtown core to the Farmers Market. This is an inviting place for seniors to live and people of all ages to recreate and explore exciting pathways to the waterfront.
- Area #3 is education and entertainment oriented. Visitors of all ages feel comfortable arriving by bus, bike or car to participate in exciting recreation opportunities. Water is a theme throughout the landscape, making connections to Swantown history, the marina and activities at the LOTT Wet Center. This is also a warehouse/light industrial, artisan and culinary arts hub that includes artist housing, studio, gallery and retail space.
- Area #4 is downtown’s historic and retail shopping core. This is also a regional theatre and entertainment district with excellent dining and night life. It is a mixed-income residential area. **Strong agreement on this area’s description.*
- Area #5 is a public and private employment center and mixed-income residential neighborhood. It includes dining; retail, civic and social services; offices; warehouse and light industrial employment. The streetscape, retail and dining options along 4th and State Avenues draw pedestrians from the historic core east toward Plum Street.
- Area #6 includes a vibrant mix of office, hospitality, retail, dining and residential uses. This compact mix of uses and a beautifully designed multi-modal Capitol Way creates an inviting connection between the State Capitol Campus and the historic, retail core.
- Area #7 is a family-friendly, high-intensity residential neighborhood anchored by the Timberland Library. This area includes many energy-efficient buildings and other examples of “green-innovations,” gardens, children oriented parks, and small-scale retail, cafés and services to serve the day-to-day needs of residents.
- Area #8 is a family-friendly residential neighborhood with a mix of housing types, including historic single family homes alongside newer, “green-built” multi-family apartments and townhomes. It also includes some offices, and small-scale retail, café and services to meet the day to day needs of residents. This area has great pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to the Capitol Campus and downtown core.



Compiled small group districts proposals (left) and simplified and interpreted districts (right)



The most popular districts proposed by Workshop 1 participants and interpreted by the consultant team. These were explored in Online Survey 1.

Survey respondents showed the most consensus on districts 1 and 4 with nearly half strongly agreeing with their descriptions. Respondents generally “somewhat agreed” with the others. Further analysis of the qualitative responses is forthcoming.

STREET TYPES LOCATION AND CHARACTER



A Festival street



B Garden-like landscaping



C Green stormwater infrastructure



D Multi-use alleys



E Ped-bike-car shared street



F Safe bike routes



H Pedestrian lighting



I Street & open space integration



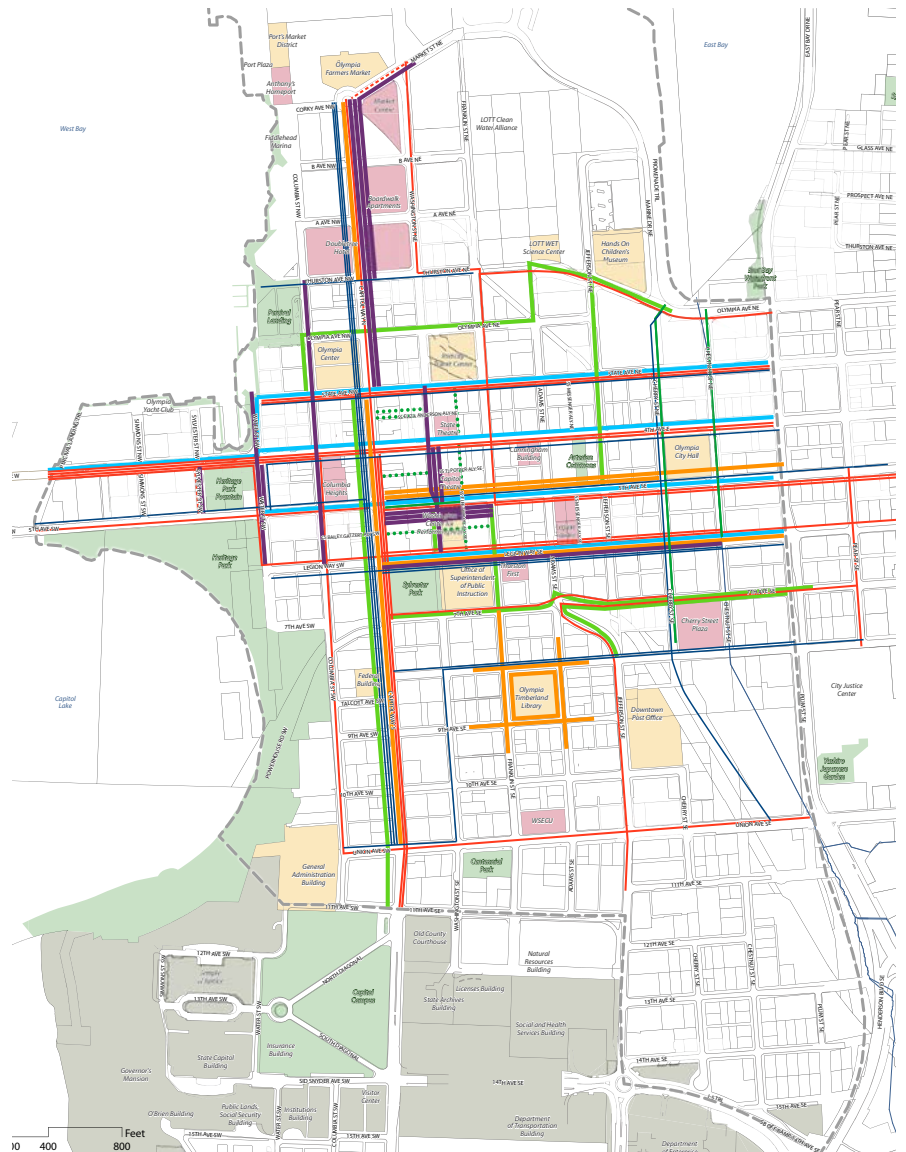
J Parklet (cafe seating or mini park in street parking space)



K Group did not identify a preferred street type

Capitol Way, Legion Way, and 5th Ave were identified for improvements more frequently than other streets. Nearly all street types were selected by at least one group. **Some of the most popular preferences were for:**

- Festival streets in the core and near the Farmers Market,
- Garden-like landscaping on 5th Ave,
- Safe bike routes on 4th Ave, portions of Capitol Way, and many east-west streets, and
- Green stormwater infrastructure on Cherry and Chestnut Streets.



Compiled small group street improvement and character type results. The number of lines on a street indicates the number of groups who selected the street for improvements. The colors and line types indicate the street type selected (see photos to the left).

RESIDENTIAL INTENSITY

Participants were asked to place blocks representing 5,000 people (approximately 2,500 new units)—the expected population growth for downtown Olympia over the next 20 years—on the map where they would like to see new residences. No consistent theme emerged; **groups generally clustered their housing in certain areas or distributed it fairly evenly throughout downtown.**

The maps below show some sample small group results.



Scattered approach



Scattered approach



East core



Southeast and scattered



Southeast



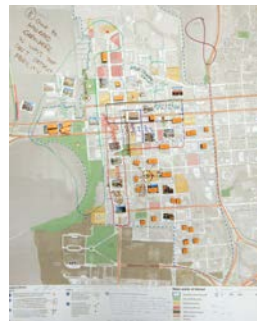
East core



Waterfront and southeast



Waterfront and southeast



East core, southeast, and waterfront



Some groups stacked their housing blocks to indicate higher density development.



Workshop results

- Common concentrations of new residential units
- Alternative approach to scatter new residential units throughout downtown
- Isthmus planning area (addressed in separate process)

Major points of interest

- Downtown planning area
- City and State parks
- Public landmarks
- Private landmarks
- State Capitol Campus
- Streams

Common concentrations of new residential units

Online Survey 1 Integration

The survey asked participants in which areas they would like to see growth and their opinion on clustering versus scattering housing:

- Survey respondents were split on a scattered (48%) versus concentrated in strategic locations (41%) approach.
- Respondents showed a **clear preference for high growth in the southeast** area via small lot or cottage clusters, townhomes, and 2-4 story single-purpose residential development.
- Respondents generally preferred limited growth in the northeast and east core, although over a third preferred high growth. Popular building types included 2-4 story mixed use, live/work, and 5-6 story mixed-use buildings.
- Respondents were split over development in the waterfront area, with 42% preferring limited growth, 41% preferring no growth, and 17% preferring high growth. This is slightly different from Workshop 1 results, where many groups placed buildings in the waterfront area. Popular building types included 2-4 story mixed use (extremely popular selection), live/work, and 5-6 story mixed use.

BUILDING CHARACTER AND LOCATION

THE ACTIVITY

Participants were provided a variety of residential, retail, commercial, mixed-use, industrial, historic, and institutional buildings photos. To indicate their preferred character for areas within downtown, they placed the photos on the map where they would like to see that particular type of development. This page’s chart shows the popularity of residential buildings. Other building types are on the following pages.

Residential Building Types

	Number of photos placed per district <small>(green indicates most popular responses)</small>								Total for whole downtown
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
 Townhomes						3	5	5	13
 Cottage clusters					1		5	4	10
 Small lot residential						1	3	5	9
 Larger residential	1	3	1	1		1	1		8
 Townhomes	1	3						3	7
 Low-rise multifamily				1			1	1	3
 3-story residential		1							1



Popular residential building types by district. The darker the grey, the greater the frequency of residential photos placed in the district.








RESIDENTIAL RESULTS

Participants preferred modern-looking townhomes, cottages, and small single family homes in the southeast and larger residential buildings in the north. Single-purpose, low-rise residential buildings were less popular.

Online Survey 1 Integration

See the previous page for residential building type results. The survey confirmed consensus on preferring high growth in the southeast via small-scale development.

Retail Building Types

	Number of photos placed per district <small>(green indicates most popular responses)</small>								Total for whole downtown
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
 Small grocery			4	3	3		1	1	12
 Commercial & plaza		3	4	2	1	1			11
 Funky		1		2	4	1			8
 Supermarket	1	1			2		2	1	7
 Ground level retail	1			1	1	1			4
 Small retail		1	1	1					3
 New retail center			2						2



Popular retail building types by district. The darker the grey, the greater the frequency of retail photos placed in the district.

RETAIL RESULTS

Participants generally preferred the expansion of retail building types into the north and east to serve residents' daily needs within walking distance. The small grocery and commercial with plaza space were especially desired in the north. The "funky" character was especially popular just east of the downtown core.

Artisan/Ind'l/Retail Building Types



Arts residential center



Live/work units



Industrial/retail



Food/beverage prep



Light industrial



Multi-story ind'l/retail



Flex/tech workspace

	Number of photos placed per district (green indicates most popular responses)								Total for whole downtown
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Arts residential center	2	1	2	6	2	1			14
Live/work units	1	1	3	1	3		2	1	12
Industrial/retail		1	1		5				7
Food/beverage prep		1	1		2		1		5
Light industrial		1	3						4
Multi-story ind'l/retail		1	2						3
Flex/tech workspace		1					2		3










Popular artisan/industrial/retail building types by district. The darker the grey, the greater the frequency of these photo types placed in the district.

ARTISAN/INDUSTRIAL/RETAIL RESULTS

Participants had a strong preference for artist housing and live/work units, especially in the core and to the northeast. Light industrial with and without associated retail was also popular in the northeast.

All photos were placed at least three times, indicating that industrial or working space in a variety of building types is desired.

Mixed-Use Building Types

	Number of photos placed per district <small>(green indicates most popular responses)</small>								Total for whole downtown
	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	
 4-story mixed use	1	3	4	1	5	1	2		17
 3-story mixed use	2	4		1	3		2	1	13
 7-story mixed use			2	4	2	1	1	1	11
 5-story mixed use	1	2	2	2	2				9
 6-story mixed use	2		1	3	2				8
 Taller res'l mixed use		1		1	1		3		6
 2-story commercial						1			1










Popular mixed-use building types by district. The darker the grey, the greater the frequency of these photos placed in the district.

MIXED-USE BUILDINGS RESULTS

Participants placed these photos more frequently and across a wider range of downtown than other types. The 4-story mixed use photo was the most popular photo used in this building character exercise. People would like to see mixed-use buildings nearly everywhere downtown.

A range of building heights were all popular, indicating that in general, participants are comfortable with taller buildings than what currently exists in much of downtown. The 6 and 7 story buildings were placed most often in the core, and the most intense building just southeast of the core. In contrast, the two-story, single-purpose, commercial building was among the least popular photos.

Historic/Institt'l Building Types

	Number of photos placed per district <small>(green indicates most popular responses)</small>								Total for whole downtown
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
 Historic preservation				6	1	2	1		10
 Complement historic			1	7					8
 Urban hotel		1	6			1			8
 Medical office			1	4			2		7
 Institutional			4	1				1	6
 Professional office		1	1			2		1	5
 Larger hotel									0



Popular historic and institutional building types by district. The darker the grey, the greater the frequency of historic and institutional photos placed in the district.

HISTORIC AND INSTITUTIONAL RESULTS

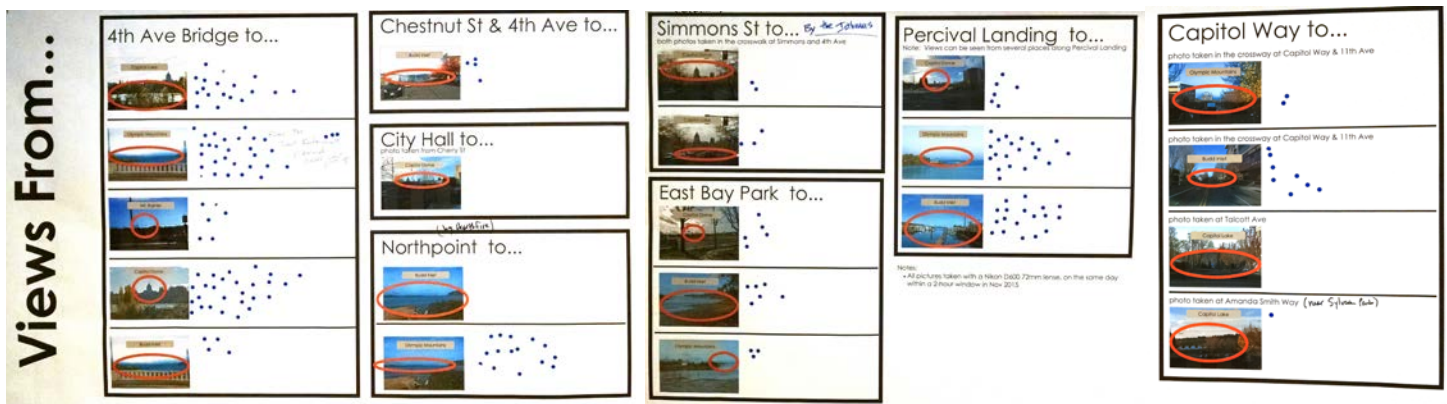
In the core, participants demonstrated a strong interest in historic preservation and complementing the existing historic character. Only "arts residential center" performed as well as these for District 4.

Hotels, offices, and institutional building types were popular in the northeast and east. Notably, large hotels were not placed anywhere.

VIEW PROTECTION

Participants placed dots on the views they most value. Views receiving 8 votes or more (in order of popularity) were:

1. 4th Ave Bridge to the Olympic Mountains,
2. 4th Ave Bridge to the Capitol Dome,
3. Percival Landing to the Olympic Mountains,
4. Percival Landing to Budd Inlet (tied with #5),
5. 4th Ave Bridge to Capitol Lake (tied with #4),
6. Northpoint to the Olympic Mountains, and
7. Capitol Way to Budd Inlet.



Dot exercise to identify valued views

Many of the identified views would likely not be affected by development in downtown (e.g., views from Percival Landing over the water), so will not be studied during this process. The MAKERS team will analyze up to 10 views to ensure protection or enhancement of important views through downtown.

NEXT STEPS

The Step 1 input will be considered along with technical analysis by staff and consultants. Many preferred concepts are reflected in proposals that will be presented at Public Workshop 2. Input regarding the character to be encouraged or enhanced in specific areas of downtown is still being reviewed and will be helpful when shaping design standards at a later stage in the process.