

January 24, 2014

**Comprehensive Plan Update
Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement
Excerpt -- pages 113 to 115:**

24. View Protection and Enhancement

Proposal

Shift policy emphasis from protecting certain views from public streets to protection and enhancement of views from public gathering places; and expand street-end water view protection to all water bodies. Proposal would add a specific views goal to the Plan.

- *PL6.10 Preserve and enhance water vistas by retaining public rights-of-way that abut or are within one block of water bodies and by not siting public buildings within associated view corridors.*
- *GL8. Community views are protected, preserved, and enhanced. (See the draft Plan for policies associated with this goal.)*

Background

Since at least the 1980s Olympia has used development regulations in an attempt to preserve and enhance views valued by the public. In general, that effort has focused on views of the Capitol Campus, Mount Rainier, Black Hills and major water bodies from streets and points near the water. Among the regulations that have been adopted are the Urban Waterfront Plan, height restrictions in Olympia Municipal Code (OMC) Chapter 18.10, and the 'View preservation' requirement of the design criteria at OMC 18.110.060: "In order to protect the existing outstanding scenic views which significant numbers of the general public have from public rights-of-way, applicants for development must consider the impact their proposal will have on views of Mt. Rainier, the Olympic Mountains, Budd Inlet, the Black Hills, the Capitol Building, and Capitol Lake or its surrounding hillsides. All development must reserve a reasonable portion of such territorial and immediate views of these features for significant numbers of people from public rights-of-way, and shall provide lookouts, viewpoints, or view corridors so that visual access to existing outstanding scenic vistas is maintained." Specific views to be preserved by this last provision are based on a 1982 map of existing views from streets. Except for a State-mandated Shoreline Master Program provision, the City's policies and regulations do not provide for protecting views from private property. During the Imagine Olympia outreach, members of the public expressed strong opinions regarding the importance of preserving views valued by the community.

Options

Option 1. The proposal: Expand existing policy regarding preserving street end views of Budd Inlet and Capitol Lake to all major water bodies, and modify valued-views protection policy from streets to a new set of "landmark views" and "observation points" to be identified at a later date. In general the features viewed would remain the same although the list of views that may be protected has been expanded to include the "State Capitol Campus Promontory" and "Olympia valley's forested hills and slopes." The

proposal does differ from current policy by deleting most street corridors from the protected viewpoints and substituting public observation points.

Option 2. No action: Retain existing policy, including: “Protect, to the greatest extent practical, scenic views of the Capitol Dome, Budd Inlet, Mount Rainier, the Black Hills, Capitol Lake, and the Olympic Mountains from designated viewing points and corridors.” Comprehensive Plan Policy LU2.2.

Option 3. Alternative to the proposal: Identify and designate specific views in the Comprehensive Plan.

Analysis

The current policy of protecting views from street “corridors” is difficult to apply on a project specific basis. Due to the linear nature of streets, view lines from a street often encompass an entire property. For example, the new Olympia City Hall fell within an area where views of the Capitol Dome from Fourth Avenue were to be protected.

Shifting the emphasis from street view protection, which apparently is derived from a ‘scenic driving’ experience of the 1970s and earlier, to protection and enhancement of views specifically from places where the public gathers would significantly reduce the number of affected properties, thus increasing opportunities for more intensive development in other areas and providing for a focused effort to retain and enhance the views most enjoyed by the general public. The revised policy regarding community-valued views could enhance the public’s continued ability to appreciate and enjoy these views, while also increasing predictability for private property owners.

As noted, associated development restrictions could result in some reduction in the development potential of certain properties and portions of the City. Such limits could lead to secondary adverse impacts associated with overall lower density development. Detailed analysis of such views and potential implications for development of specific properties would be conducted as part of the process of evaluating and adopting any such regulations.

The related change would expand an existing water-vistas-at-street-ends policy to include all water bodies and not just Budd Inlet and Capitol Lake; for example, to include the Fish and Wildlife Department access to Ward Lake. (Compare current Comprehensive Plan Policy LU2.10 and proposed Policy PL6.9.) As such, it would result in slightly reduced potential for development on shorelines, would preserve and potentially enhance public access to shorelines consistent with Shoreline Management Act goals, and provide the potential for habitat and other environmental enhancement in these few locations.

Original Staff Proposal

Option 1. Adopt revised policy reflecting shift in emphasis from views from streets to views from other public places and expanding street-end view protection to include all major water bodies. Although staff did not propose view protection as an ultimate goal, the policy originally proposed by staff was to, “Identify and designate significant public viewpoints and – with consideration of trees and other enhancing landscaping – protect, preserve and enhance particular views of the Capitol Campus, Budd Inlet, Downtown skyline, Mount Rainier, the Black Hills, Capitol Lake and surrounding treed slopes, and the Olympic Mountains, such as” (The staff proposal concluded with a set of examples different from those proposed by the Commission in Policy PL6.10.)

Planning Commission Recommendation

Option 1. Note, although in substance substantially the same as the version proposed by the staff in 2012, the Commission's recommended version is more verbose and includes different examples – as a result the evaluation of view-examples that was included in earlier drafts of this SEIS is no longer directly relevant and has been removed.