

**From:** jen olson <jenolson@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 17, 2024 1:21 PM  
**To:** Capital Mall Triangle Plan  
**Subject:** biking in West Olympia

Hello,

As the weather gets nice and I bike more around West Olympia, I realize how difficult it is to negotiate West Olympia by bike. Hopefully the Capital Mall Triangle subarea plan includes better access for those on bike. In particular:

- Biking on Black Lake Blvd is dangerous and I have to use the sidewalk between Harrison and 101 exits.
  - If I'm trying to get to the Cooper point/Black Lake area, I often might drive due instead of bike to avoid the dangerous route section from Harrison to Cooper Point.
- Harrison from downtown bridge to Black Lake is difficult to negotiate by bike. i use residential streets instead. The City may consider have a designated bike route (maybe up 5th Ave?) that is well marked so that cars look out for bikes on the designated bike route from downtown up the hill.
- There is no easy route to get from the SW neighborhood to TESC or the bike paths in that area. Hopefully the Triangle Plan will resolve that issue and not make it worse.
- Not many Jefferson or Capital kids bike to school. School age kids need safe routes to get to Coleman including possibly a "bike route" for school age kids coming from the SW neighborhood such as signage from the crosswalk on Harrison/Perry to the Jefferson/Captial area, more bike racks at both schools. This may also be needed for the other quadrants to increase safe access for kids to bike to school.
- Capital mall is car-centric. Bikes need to compete with cars in all lanes and negotiation of parking lots to get to the limited bike racks (and drivers are not always looking for bikes).
  - There are also no pedestrian sidewalks in some areas of capital mall for kids, those with strollers or other walking devices who cannot jump up on the grass if a car drives by.

My apologies for the laundry list. I have not read the most recent plan nor attended the recent public hearing, so disregard if these issues have already been addressed. I love to bike in Olympia and hope the younger generation does as well. We look forward to the West Olympia development and hope it is bike friendly,

Sincerely,

Jen Olson  
1023 5th Avenue SW  
Olympia, WA 98502  
503-901-4523

**From:** A Z <digranesjl@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 17, 2024 1:41 PM  
**To:** Capital Mall Triangle Plan  
**Subject:** Quality of Living

I've read quite a bit about increasing the amount of asphalt and the height of buildings. Not much about establishing parks, maintaining/increasing tree canopy cover, or environmentally sound noise reduction plantings

So, is the Planning Department really working for sustainable, quality of living growth ... taking taxpayers for a ride?

Joe Digranes  
Olympia



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April 2, 2024

To: Olympia Planning Commissioners

Subject: Joint Comment Letter on the Draft Capital Mall Subarea Plan

Dear Commissioners,

The Community Visioning Group (CVG) and West Olympia Business Association (WOBA) have carefully reviewed the Draft Capital Mall Subarea Plan dated March 7, 2024. We appreciate the extensive work that has gone into developing this vision for the future of the Capital Mall area. However, we have significant concerns about the plan's feasibility, impacts, and missing elements that must be addressed before it can serve as a reliable framework for the area's future.

First, the plan lacks a comprehensive transportation strategy to support the envisioned growth. Key issues like the future of the Harrison Avenue corridor, the location and capacity of the Intercity Transit Hub, and the phasing of transportation investments are deferred to future studies, leaving critical uncertainties. In particular, we believe planning for 4th Avenue should be coordinated closely with a vision for Harrison Avenue as a walkable, transit-oriented corridor, not addressed prematurely in isolation. A more integrated and definitive transportation plan is essential.

Second, we are concerned the plan's ambitious development vision may not be economically feasible or contextually appropriate. The proposed building heights, densities and uses need to be rigorously vetted for market viability to ensure the plan requirements and incentives are realistically calibrated. We worry that incompatibilities with the scale and character of surrounding neighborhoods may also hinder the prospects for successful redevelopment. More analysis is needed to confirm the plan offers a workable framework for stimulating change.

Third, the plan suggests extensive public investments in land acquisition, existing business support, affordable housing, transportation projects and amenities - but the City's capacity to fund these investments is not demonstrated. There also appears to be a risk that conversion of commercial space to residential and public uses could diminish the area's vital role as a regional economic engine and tax base for City services. Additional analysis of these fiscal implications and tradeoffs is required.

Finally, the omission of specifics on changes to parking ratios, development standards, and design requirements leaves the feasibility of the plan unclear. These details need to be pinned down and vetted thoroughly with the development community and property owners to ensure that the regulations, incentives and process will truly facilitate the envisioned transformation.

In sum, while the Subarea Plan is a start, it is not yet a complete, convincing and actionable roadmap for change. We urge the Planning Commission and City Council to invest the time needed to close these gaps, align the plan with market realities, and build solid stakeholder consensus before adopting it as the fixed blueprint for the area's future. The CVG and WOBA stand ready to fully engage in this effort.



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Thank you for considering our concerns and recommendations. We look forward to rolling up our sleeves with the City and community to shape a revised plan that we can all get behind - and that will deliver a thriving, equitable and sustainable future for the Capital Mall area.

Sincerely,

The West Olympia Community Visioning Group  
The West Olympia Business Association

1 April 2024

Greetings, Olympia Planning Commissioners –

For about 15 years now, I've been interested in the redevelopment potential of a significant part of the area referred to as the Capital Mall Triangle. My primary area of interest, as a westside resident and transportation planner, has been the 1970s-era triangle bounded by Harrison Avenue to the north, Cooper Point Road to the west, and Black Lake Boulevard to the east. Contrary to the study area boundaries – bounded inexplicably by the centerlines of Black Lake Boulevard and Cooper Point Road – the functional area actually includes both sides of those arterials and a swath around the perimeter.

In my capacity at TRPC at the time, I led the public engagement element of the original West Olympia Access Study in 2010-11, from which the Yauger Way ramp/Kaiser Road interchange concept was born. I facilitated TRPC's urban corridors policy maker initiative, focused on transforming the region's pre-I-5/US 101 federal and state highway corridors into walkable, people-oriented transit corridors. Harrison Avenue is the west end of the regionally significant Harrison/4<sup>th</sup>-State/Martin Way urban corridor extending all the way to the UGA boundary east of Lacey. This is where Intercity Transit is growing high frequency urban corridor service. I am a founding member of the West Olympia Community Visioning Group (CVG), a tiny non-profit hellbent on catalyzing West Olympia economic and geographic assets for the benefit of surrounding residents, the city, and the regional economy. CVG initiated the acquisition around 2011-12 of the 27-acre Yuell parcel between Yauger Park/Harrison Avenue and Grass Lake. We were also instrumental in getting this study on the city's 2021 planning docket and supported its efforts in obtaining a grant for this work. City staff and consultants will attest, with some degree of exhaustion, that I provided ample input and formal comment along the way.

At the end of the day, it was an unfortunate grant for what the city needed. The purpose of this Commerce grant program was to preserve housing affordability within established Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) areas like Northgate, where an old mall has transformed over the last two decades into a vibrant mixed use community. Massive public investments in a Sound Transit Link light rail station and supporting infrastructure is driving up housing demand and reducing the availability of affordable housing in that robust mixed-use, transit-oriented area. That is not West Olympia's situation.

The grant Olympia received was not really intended to help a community develop an understanding of what "Transit-Oriented Development" actually means and the mechanisms by which a highly suburban area that is also an economic engine for the city can transform over time to be a less car-dependent place. That kind of a process might have evaluated what kinds of retrofits make sense in different areas and why, and the various considerations and trade-offs that go into transforming an area from a thriving regional commercial center to a robust mixed-use area that retains its regional commercial significance. Drawing the study area boundary north of Harrison ensured the planning subarea included some residential uses, but no one would mistake those areas for TOD. Nor are recommendations of the draft plan concerned with making those existing residential areas more transit-oriented and mixed-use.

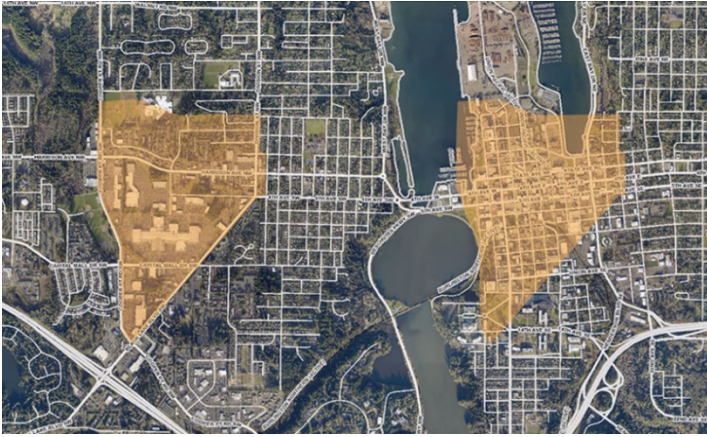
My concerns about unresolved transportation issues this plan dodges are well documented throughout the process and not worth additional time to rehash here, except to say they are compounded by the "black box magic" of the traffic mitigation fee structure associated with the recommendation. I'm more familiar than most people with transportation mitigation fee mechanisms, and I couldn't begin to explain this one beyond the theoretical intent.

Instead, my comments to you are concerned with the overall economic feasibility of the plan and the consequences of using it as the basis for a Planned Action EIS. I have some thoughts about Harrison Avenue and 4<sup>th</sup>, too.

**If it doesn't pencil out, it won't be built.**

I regret my comments don't reflect more confidence in the process, the resulting plan, and recommendations. I'm concerned it does not present a feasible, pragmatic strategy for stimulating the kind of infill and redevelopment that will transform this area over time. Saddling this whole thing with a Planned Action EIS only compounds that concern. No one is advocating for keeping the area as it is, generally. But if it is not feasible, little will change in this area over the next two to three decades. Distasteful as many find the sentiment, the reality is that if it won't pencil out, it won't be built.

This is a significant geography. The subarea is as big as all of downtown Olympia, from the Farmers Market to the Capitol.



It is an economic engine for the city, generating retail sales tax and B&O revenue for essential services and urban amenities across the city, pulling in revenue for Olympia's General Fund coffers from a retail-trade area that draws heavily from five counties. The "Capital Mall Triangle" underwrites many city services and amenities that people equate with the high quality of life in Olympia. Taxpayers from other counties grow the General Fund. My understanding is that the city intends for it to continue in this regard. This is good because residential uses cost more in taxpayer funded services than they generate in taxes.

With that context it seemed reasonable to expect we would look at the potential economic impacts of alternatives to assess how changes in land use will diminish or increase opportunities for revenue generation, for business and city tax base alike. Will there be more square footage for tax-generating commercial purposes in the future or less, given the intended repurposing of commercial areas for non-commercial uses? Concepts like Floor Area Ratio and aggregate taxes generated per square foot of building area are often employed when planning for commercial areas and changes in use over time, to evaluate the relative net impacts of proposed changes. This process was not burdened with that kind of analysis, and so it is hard to know what the likely effects will be on city resources of the proposed changes in land use and resulting tax base.

My efforts to pin down gross estimates were unsuccessful, but the Preferred Alternative will take a significant share of private land out of commercial use and put it into public use – for a connected grid of "Main Street treatment" streets built at developer expense, protected bike lanes and trails, public parks and gathering spaces, and public buildings. It aims to replace a sizeable share of the remaining commercial land with residential uses. We may end up with the same square footage of commercial uses, but it will be stacked into more expensive multi-story buildings. The Preferred Alternative will require developer-funded structured parking to support all of this, a very expensive proposition for replacing all of that surface parking to meet commercial and residential needs. All of this will be reflected in the resulting rents for businesses and residents alike, perhaps contrary to city objectives to focus a lot of affordable housing in this area and support small businesses.

The Preferred Alternatives is meant to stimulate private sector investments towards converting single-use commercial lands into mixed-use transit-oriented development with a high proportion of affordable units and extensive public amenities, and with assurance of a "streamlined" development process. I lack confidence that its recommendations are sound and make sense over the next two to three decades in our economic market here in West Olympia. It's unfortunate because there is a lot to be said for redevelopment potential in this area, but it isn't Northgate.

**Harrison Avenue is low-hanging fruit for neighborhood scale, walkable mixed-use infill and redevelopment served by high frequency urban transit services – aka Transit-Oriented Development. Future redevelopment of 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue should be oriented towards Harrison, not the mall. Pull 4<sup>th</sup> from the Preferred Alternative and reserve it for the future Harrison Avenue corridor study and Black Lake corridor study.**

One consequence of the study emphasis on mall redevelopment is that it marginalized the potential of Harrison Avenue infill and redevelopment, designating it as low redevelopment potential and deferring it to some future study effort. Yet Harrison is arguably the ripest opportunity for neighborhood compatible transit-oriented infill and redevelopment of the entire subarea.

Failure to consider the role of Harrison Avenue in generating mixed-use infill and redevelopment compatible with surrounding neighborhoods and supported by high frequency transit service undermines the wisdom of including 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the proposed redevelopment scheme for the Planned Action EIS. Incentivizing redevelopment of 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue without a clear vision for Harrison and the relationship between the two streets is short sighted.

Redevelopment of 4<sup>th</sup> should orient towards Harrison at least as much or more so than internally towards Capital Mall. It is local and neighborhood oriented, not regionally oriented like the mall. High frequency transit will be on Harrison, not internal to the hub envisioned in the plan. Planning for 4th jointly with Harrison presents rare opportunities associated with redeveloping an old highway corridor (Harrison Avenue was Primary State Highway 9 before US 101 was built, with buildings from that era) in coordination with a relatively undeveloped parallel road one city block away (4<sup>th</sup> Ave). It is part of the whole Harrison Avenue transit-oriented corridor development scheme that this plan ignores because it's not mall redevelopment. There are no more than two parcels between the two streets, and a couple of parcels go from street to street. Some parcels have land values in excess of building values, a key indicator in identifying properties with great potential for redevelopment in the near-term.

This study's focus on mall redevelopment minimized the potential value of Harrison in achieving actual transit-oriented development. Pursuing redevelopment of 4<sup>th</sup> before thinking through the strategy for Harrison (and the intersection of 4<sup>th</sup>/Black Lake/Division) misses an important transportation-land use relationship that can easily preclude high-value opportunities to orient development towards the actual high frequency transit corridor on Harrison Avenue. Redevelopment of 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue should be excluded from this subarea plan recommendations and revisited whenever the city gets around to taking a serious look at Harrison Avenue.

**Is it a subarea plan or a subarea wish? Time will tell.**

The city is about to adopt a plan and Planned Action EIS for this subarea, whether it pencils out or not. We can articulate in fine detail the land use we want to occur and all the public features we want, but if it doesn't pencil out, it won't happen. That will be true here, too.

It was stunning to me to learn the city knew its development regs conflicted with the HDC4 zoning that has been in place here for over a decade and did nothing to correct that. No wonder no redevelopment occurred – there's not enough parking at Capital Mall today to meet the city's current parking standards, much less with intensified uses. This goes for trees, too. This highly developed area can't redevelop and meet the city's tree standards required in code.

It sure seems like there were obvious measures that could have been taken that may well result in more redevelopment interest and built form envisioned in the Comprehensive Plan than this will, but we'll never know. I fear this plan will result in a whole new array of internal inconsistencies and unrealistic developer requirements that will further delay reinvestment into this area and undermine future business and property owner opportunities.

As someone who's thought about how this area could grow and change more than most sane people, I close with a cautionary note.

The Nisqually Indian Tribe is finalizing its plans for mixed-use development of a 200+ acre tract of land just off I-5 in northeast Lacey. It's an area roughly the size of the commercial triangle within Olympia's subarea, without all the challenges that come with redevelopment anywhere. The Tribe and Lacey will be exacting in their standards, and their development process will be predictable for developers. It will be an attractive investment opportunity for the kind of built environment Olympia's plan would like to generate and it will suck up a lot of investment capital for a couple of decades or more.

There's only so much investment capital to go around. This region has a finite capacity to generate and absorb private sector investment. Investors have choices; Olympia is not the only show in town. We owe it to the businesses and property owners in West Olympia to ensure the plans and regulations that will bind their properties and investments for decades to come are reasonable and financially feasible, including a development code aligns with the city zoning.

I wish you luck sorting through all the comments you're receiving. It is no small task to help the city devise a rational and productive path forward. Thank you for all the time you put into your work.



*Thera Black*  
Conger Avenue, Westside

**From:** Gerald Y <geyezell@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, April 19, 2024 11:02 AM  
**To:** Capital Mall Triangle Plan  
**Subject:** Input for Comp Plan Updates

Increase housing density in the city to create walkable neighborhoods with transit access that supports minimal development in the unincorporated rural area of the county.

Gerald Yezell  
Sent from my iPhone

**From:** Lisa Bailey <squitahead@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 22, 2024 6:55 PM  
**To:** Capital Mall Triangle Plan  
**Subject:** Leave rural areas Rural!

Please please:

Increase density in the city to create walkable neighborhoods with transit access that minimizes development in unincorporated rural areas of the county, and don't support attempts by the county to rezone rural areas to urban to pretend that's not development of unincorporated rural areas.

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPad](#)

**From:** Judi Dedge <[kleinsmithjm7@gmail.com](mailto:kleinsmithjm7@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Friday, April 26, 2024 11:49 AM  
**To:** Capital Mall Triangle Plan  
**Subject:** Re: PRESERVE RURAL LANDS

Please adopt the sustainable Thurston goal of building NO MORE THAN 5% of new housing in rural areas, and don't rezone rural areas to urban to claim you're accomplishing the goal. Most future housing growth should be in the denser urban areas.

Also, increase density in the city to create walkable neighborhoods with transit access that minimizes development in unincorporated rural areas of the county, and don't support attempts by the county to rezone rural areas to urban to pretend that's not development of unincorporated rural areas.

Thank you.

On Fri, Apr 26, 2024 at 11:44 AM Judi Dedge <[kleinsmithjm7@gmail.com](mailto:kleinsmithjm7@gmail.com)> wrote:

| Please adopt the sustainable Thurston goal of building NO MORE