



September 4, 2015

Olympia City Council  
PO Box 1967  
Olympia, WA 98507

Dear Mayor Buxbaum and City Councilmembers:

The Olympia Planning Commission (OPC) has conducted its review of the City of Olympia's 2016-2021 Preliminary Capital Facilities Plan (Draft CFP) as required by the Growth Management Act. We agree that maintaining our existing resources should be the major emphasis of the plan. Following is a summary of our recommendations for your consideration.

### **CAPITAL FACILITIES ELEMENT GOALS AND POLICIES**

The 2014 Planning Commission CFP letter included a recommendation to revise the 2013 the Capital Facilities Element (CFE) goals and policies that are found on page 119 of this year's Draft CFP. One of our main objectives was to ensure that projects in the Capital Facilities Plan are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan recommended by the Planning Commission. The revised CFE goals and policies were approved by Council and are included in the draft 2015 CFP.

**Recommendation:** To provide clarity and intent the OPC recommends including the Capital Facilities Element (CFE) goals and policies in the Introduction section of the 2016-2021 CFP.

### **MAINTENANCE FUNDING**

The Planning Commission agrees that protection of our assets should be the first priority of capital funding in the Draft CFP. Additional funding is also needed for parks and street maintenance. The City needs to find ways to more fully fund its maintenance responsibilities now or deficiencies will increase in size and cost, and negatively impact quality of service and future budgets.

**Recommendation:** The Planning Commission recognizes that, given the current financial conditions, meeting our maintenance funding needs is no easy task. However, we believe that the City should place a priority on implementing revenue measures that address park and road maintenance needs.

## **PARKS**

### Parks Funding

Parks are a valuable amenity to Olympia residents and demand for parks continues to grow. According to a recent Elway survey, 95% of respondents had visited an Olympia park in the last year. Parks and open space enhance quality of life; provide natural habitat and recreational opportunities for residents.

Community, Neighborhood Parks and Open Space are valuable assets for the City. According to the 2010 Parks, Arts and Recreation Plan (PAR) the City is currently under target for its Level of Service Standards for neighborhood and community parks. To keep pace with projected population growth an additional 40 acres of park land and development are needed every ten years to meet the City's Service Standards. The 2016 CFP includes \$1,935,000 for park land acquisition in 2016 and \$1,000,000 per year from 201-2021 for park land acquisition.

In the 2015 PAR Plan Survey respondents identified maintenance of existing facilities and improving and upgrading existing City parks as top priorities. Through its Condition Assessment and Major Maintenance Program (CAMPP), the Parks Department has identified a \$4 million deficiency backlog in major parks maintenance projects and requested \$500,000 in 2016 and \$2,500,000 for 2017-2021 to address the backlog.

Percival Landing is a popular destination spot and major capital asset of the City. Given the extensive capital cost for repairs and reconstruction, the facility merits its own program. Creating the Percival Landing Major Maintenance and Reconstruction as a separately funded program.

The Parks & Recreation Department is finalizing a business plan as a component of its next update of its long-range Parks, Arts, and Recreation Plan. The business plan will provide a comprehensive analysis of park needs, existing and potential revenue sources, and funding scenarios.

**Recommendation:** The City should consider increasing revenues, rather than reducing Park standards. Current funding levels are insufficient to sustain the City's Service Level Standard of Neighborhood Parks, Community Parks and Open Space land acquisition.

Impact fees should continue to be used for land acquisition (they are prohibited from being used for maintenance).

A Park Plan was initiated in 2015 and will identify park needs, among many other possible park improvements. We recommend that the Parks Department wait for the outcome of that plan before investing significantly in any further funds or making any further

improvements in parks, other than immediate safety improvements. In addition The Parks Business Plan is critical tool for future parks capital facility planning efforts.

The City should consider devoting some portion of any new funding source it implements to parks maintenance. As stated earlier in the letter, we believe maintenance of existing infrastructure should be a top priority for the City.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### Multimodal Investment

**Recommendation:** The City should proceed as expeditiously as possible with a proposed traffic engineering study to define an appropriate level of investment in bicycle and pedestrian facilities funded by transportation impact fees. Concurrently, the City should perform or have performed legal analysis to assure such investments are done in a manner consistent with the Growth Management Act.

The multi-modal approach to meeting transportation needs provides the logic for the use of transportation impact fees. Increased and improved bicycle lanes, including protected bike lanes where indicated, and increased and improved sidewalks can contribute significantly to a reduction in car traffic generation from new development and reduce the need for investments in car related facilities. On a per-trip basis, bicycle and pedestrian facilities can often be more cost effective than investments to accommodate more cars.

### Bicycle Facilities Program

We commend the work of the City on the identification of potential bikeways on low traffic streets in the neighborhoods of the City and look forward to signage to encourage use of the first of these routes in the next year.

Because of higher traffic on all routes going into and through the downtown, the Council allocated \$170,000 for identification and implementation of a single bicycle route through the downtown.

We are aware that the cost of a “through town” route exceeds available funds and that instead; the City proposes a “to town” route that terminates near Sylvester Park. We recognize this as a positive first step.

Given the limited funding available, we urge that a “to town” route and a possible “through town” route be first tested with appropriate stripping and impermanent structures, e.g. temporary bollards, to determine public response, prior to investment of the major portions of the allocated funds.

**Recommendation:** Our recommendation of continued consideration of a “through town” route reflects our concern that without a route to destinations beyond Sylvester Park, e.g. the Farmers’ Market and Capitol Lake, and without an increase in protected bike lanes in the downtown, the current investment will not be optimized.

### Sidewalks, Pathways, and Other Pedestrian Programs

The Parks and Pathways–Sidewalk Program (p. 56) and the Sidewalk Construction Program (p. 59) both address the City’s sidewalk needs. The Draft CFP provides \$6.5 million and \$153,000, respectively, for these two programs. Since 2003, only 9.2% of the sidewalk miles included in the 2003 Program Sidewalk Plan have been completed. At the current rate, the sidewalk “needs” will not be met for many decades. We need to adjust our expectations, increase funding, or find ways to make our investment go farther.

The Parks and Pathways – Neighborhood Pathways Program is funded at \$125,000 for 2015 and the following five years (p. 54). Neighborhood involvement in this program in 2014 has been very encouraging and the completed projects are widely supported in the community.

**Recommendation:** The OPC recommends that the City consider revising the technical requirements and construction standards for sidewalks to make our dollars go farther.

Based on evidence that “walkability” depends to a significant extent on walkable destinations, investment in sidewalks should be closely tied to existing and future neighborhood centers.

The City should reassess the 2003 sidewalk priority list by accepting input from neighborhood associations and other citizen groups on local sidewalk priorities. This input would be based in part on the planned neighborhood planning process.

The OPC supports continued funding of the Neighborhood Pathways Program out of Parks and Pathways utility tax funds.

We also strongly support the pedestrian safety projects in the Hazard Elimination (p.53), Pedestrian Crossing Improvements (p. 57), and ADA Requirements (p. 61) programs. These programs should be very high priorities of the City for at least three reasons: the value of human life, the need to encourage walking, and the potential cost to the City from liability claims.

### Street Repair and Reconstruction

To be included.

## **TRANSPORTATION WITH IMPACT FEES**

### Use of Transportation Impact Fees in the Downtown

**Recommendation:** We recognize that transportation impact fees must be spent on facilities related to amelioration of traffic congestion resulting from the residential and commercial facilities generating increased traffic. Recent analysis reveals that 20% of trips generated by new residential development in Olympia terminate or pass through the downtown. Therefore, we recommend that the downtown be included in consideration of appropriate traffic amelioration investments funded by transportation impact fees.

These improvements can include improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities that can reduce the number of car trips to or through the downtown.

### Hazard Elimination Pedestrian Crossing Improvements

In conjunction with the Hazard Elimination Pedestrian Crossing Improvements, we recommend that the City formally adopt a “Vision Zero” program with the stated objective of reducing injuries and deaths of pedestrians, bicyclists, and car drivers to zero.

While improved physical facilities such as protected bike lanes, wider sidewalks, and improved crossings are important, they are not sufficient. To achieve a desired elimination of injury and death from collisions between cars, pedestrians, and bicyclists, we recommend a much-enhanced level of education and enforcement of traffic and pedestrian safety by the City.

## **GENERAL CAPITAL FACILITIES**

### Urban Forestry

The adopted 2014 Comprehensive Plan contains numerous references to the value of trees in our community as stated in GN3-“ A healthy and diverse urban forest is protected, expanded, and valued for its contribution to the environment and community.” As well as the following:

PN3.1 Manage the urban forest to professional standards, and establish program goals and practices based on the best scientific information available.

PN3.2 Measure the tree canopy and set a citywide target for increasing it through tree preservation and planting.

An important tool that maybe be used, in implementing the above references goals and practices, would be an Urban Forestry Master Plan. It would be a significant resource tool

for protecting and supporting the City's long-range urban forestry goals as well as understanding the existing and future tree needs of the community.

**Recommendation:** It was recommended, in the Olympia Planning Commission's CFP review letter for 2014, that an Urban Forestry Master Plan be developed. We urge the City to continue the efforts to build a strong and vibrant asset in developing an Urban Forestry Master Plan to accomplish the Comprehensive Plan goals and policies within the six-year timeframe.

### **OLYMPIA SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Under provisions of the Growth Management Act, the City collects school impact fees, which are then transferred to the Olympia School District (District). Because of the role of the City in collecting school impact fees, the City routinely reviews the Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) of the Olympia School District.

The CFP of the District and the calculation of impact fees contained therein is the exclusive responsibility of the District. Any concerns or challenges to the fee, the manner in which it is calculated, or the transparency of the calculation are matters for the District and not the City to resolve. The Commission does, however, identify two separate areas of concern for consideration by the District and Council.

#### Fluctuation of School Impact Fees

OPC Subcommittee has expressed concerns to the OSD and is awaiting a response addressing those concerns. The committee will provide a section on the School Impact fee when such a response is received. If no response is received in time for inclusion in the letter the OPC will provide a statement of our concerns and recommendations.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM 2014 LETTER**

We ask that this letter be viewed as a supplement to the CFP recommendation letter the Planning Commission submitted to Council in October 2014. We encourage you to revisit the following issues in the 2014 letter, which we continue to support:

- Developing a comprehensive funding plan for Percival Landing.
- Converting to a two-year budget for capital and operating expenditures  
Implementing volume-based rates for residential wastewater use.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Olympia Planning Commission and its Finance Subcommittee appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments and recommendations regarding the 2016-2021 Capital Facilities Plan. We hope the Council finds them helpful in their budget deliberations. We will gladly answer any questions that might arise from this letter.

We also would like to express our appreciation for the work of all those who helped develop the Draft CFP and OSD CFP, and for those who patiently answered our many questions, including Jane Kirkemo, Mark Russell, Randy Wesselman, Sophie Stimson, David Hanna, David Okerlund, and Andy Haub of City staff and Jennifer Priddy of OSD. Many thanks to Todd Stamm, Leonard Todd and Nancy Lenzi of Community Planning and Development staff for their support of our Finance Subcommittee. We would also like to thank the Utility Advisory Committee, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, and members of the public who provided comments and letters.

Sincerely,

**Carole Richmond, CHAIR**  
Olympia Planning Commission

**Jessica Bateman, CHAIR**  
OPC Finance Subcommittee