

Tour of Olympia's Neighborhood Centers

Olympia's proposed Comprehensive Plan Update includes 17 proposed neighborhood centers – *See attached map*. Many of these areas are currently undeveloped or underdeveloped. Recently, Olympia and regional planners toured these spaces to assess opportunities and whether the current regulations are realistic. It was eye-opening!

Neighborhood Center (NC) is a zoning district; allowed uses and development standards are outlined in [Olympia Municipal Code 18.05](#). The purposes of the Neighborhood Center District are as follows:

1. To enable development of neighborhood centers (e.g., containing neighborhood oriented businesses and a small park) in established neighborhoods in order to create neighborhood focal points and activity centers, accommodate routine shopping needs, and provide a sense of neighborhood identity.
2. To enable a land use pattern which will reduce dependence on auto use, especially drive-alone vehicle use during morning and evening commute hours.
3. To enable many of the community's residents to live within one-fourth (¼) mile of a grocery store and transit stop.
4. To enable the design of new development in a manner which will ensure the safe and efficient movement of goods and people.
5. To provide for convenient pedestrian and vehicular access between the center and the surrounding neighborhood.
6. To ensure that neighborhood centers are compatible with adjoining uses and do not undermine the economic viability of existing or designated neighborhood centers, village centers, or other neighborhood businesses.
7. To ensure that buildings and other site features are arranged, designed, and oriented to facilitate pedestrian access and access for transit.

Summary of the current zoning regulations for neighborhood centers:

- 2-10 acres in size
- Over ½ mile from other commerce
- Along collector or arterial streets
- Transit stop within 600 ft.
- Compatible with adjoining uses
- Direct walking/ trail access
- Include housing (min. 10% floor area)
- Include food store
- Square feet of business use: 5k min, 20k max retail; 30k max total
- Include 1-4 acres of civic green space

Planning Commission Tour of Neighborhood Centers

Here are some ideas to kick-start the discussion:

Purpose: Is there anything specific the Commission hopes discover or gain on this tour?

Conceptual Itinerary:

- Meet on a Saturday at 9 AM
- Tour NC's by vehicle between 9am-Noon
- Stop for lunch at a NC establishment (i.e., San Francisco Bakery), noon-1PM
- Return to City Hall for a discussion, 1-2:30 PM

Attendance: The Commission previously discussed whether or not to invite specific individuals or groups for the tour and/or subsequent discussion. Staff recommends that if the Commission wants to speak to experts about neighborhood center development, that this be a subsequent event on a different date. The tour may provide context for planning such an event. Of course, any member of the public may join the tour.

Travel: The tour will be noticed as an open public meeting with an itinerary, and anyone can join the tour along the way. There may be more than one option for travel:

Option 1: Use City Vehicles

- Commission travels in 3 separate vehicles, so that a quorum does not "meet" in a car.
- Tour at location(s) may be audio recorded; car trips would not.
- Commissioners may have discussion about NC's in cars and on location.
- Public would need to travel in own vehicles due to City vehicle insurance policies.

Option 2: Charter a Small Bus

- Commissioners travel together on the bus, along with interested public.
- Tour at location(s) and on the bus will likely be audio recorded.
- Commissioners may have discussion in cars and on location about the NC's.

Dates: Possible dates when staff is available include:

- Saturday, July 13
- Saturday, July 20
- Saturday, August 24
- Saturday, September 14

Retreat Planning Committee: Consider asking the Leadership Team, with help from staff, to plan the retreat details, to be finally approved by the full Commission. This may include:

- Selecting 6-12 of the neighborhood centers to stop at. (May want to just drive by others, such as the undeveloped site of the future Bentrige Village, which has an approved master plan.)
- Choosing a site for lunch.
- Drafting the itinerary.