

#### #4. THE REZONE PROCESS

Should the Comprehensive Plan describe a specific process for changing land use zoning?

##### **Summary of Comments**

Among the many ‘put zoning back in the Plan’ comments were calls to retain the current process for amending the zoning map. In particular, many parties suggested that such amendments be limited to once each year; while a few suggested more flexibility.

##### **Council Direction of August 12, 2014**

While expressing general support for the approach proposed in the Comprehensive Plan update, the City Council requested that a work session be scheduled to discuss the option of limiting changing in zoning to once each year.

##### **Staff Analysis**

In the mid-1990s Olympia adopted a new ‘Future Land Use map’ in the Comprehensive Plan and a new land use zoning map as part of the development code. That Future Land Use map was more detailed than the previous version and resulted in a zoning map that practically ‘mirrored’ the Plan map. One result of the ‘mirrored’ maps approach was that most proposals to amend the zoning map (“rezones”) were combined with a proposed Plan amendment. State law requires that Plan amendments be considered no more often than once each year and that all annual amendments be processed concurrently. As a result, for the last twenty years nearly all zoning map amendments have also been subject to these process limitations.

As part of the ‘Imagine Olympia’ process of updating the Comprehensive Plan, the staff proposed and the Planning Commission supported a proposal to return to a more general Future Land Use map that would provide more flexibility with regard to development regulations, including with regard to the zoning map. This more general Future Land Use map was part of the Council’s hearing draft. At the hearing, members of the public suggested that even if the detailed Future Land Use map is not retained, the ‘once per year’ limitation should continue to be imposed on rezone requests.

There are advantage and disadvantages to the ‘once per year’ process:

<b>ANNUAL REZONE PROCESS</b>	<b>‘ANYTIME’ REZONE PROCESS</b>
Easier for general public to track and participate	Parties not receiving direct notice may not know about proposed rezones
Combined effect of all proposals can be considered	Each proposal reviewed individually
Proposals must be submitted before annual deadline; late proposals may be delayed a year or more	Rezone process can be initiated at any time; thus potential proponents not deterred by need to wait

Review process constrained by annual schedule; 'one size fits all' timeline, etc.	Rezone process can be adapted to scope of issues and extent of public interest in proposal
End of calendar year deadline leads to pressure to make final decision or 'lose' a year	Flexible schedule allows more opportunity to explore options and achieve consensus
Easier to schedule; especially on Planning Commission and Council agendas	Can result in scheduling public meetings during busy periods

In both instances, the final rezone decision would be made by the City Council. The draft Plan directs that there be criteria for evaluating the merits of proposed rezones but does not address other aspects of the rezone process.

To limit rezone applications to a consolidated once-per-year process the Council could either describe such a process in the Comprehensive Plan, or could more directly require it by amending the development code to impose such a limit.

Note that two related development code amendments have been recommended by the Planning Commission and are scheduled to be presented to the Council after the updated Comprehensive Plan is adopted. The Commission has recommended that the criteria for evaluating proposed rezones be updated to reflect provisions of the new Plan, and that all proposed rezones be subject to review and recommendation by the Commission. (Current code provides that some are reviewed by the Hearing Examiner, instead.)

**Text of Public Hearing Draft**

Land Use and Urban Design Policy 1.4 Require functional and efficient development by adopting and periodically updating zoning consistent with the Future Land Use Map.

**Alternatives to the Draft**

The Council may choose to approve the Plan as proposed, or may wish to direct either:

1. That Policy 1.4 be revised by adding, "To ensure appropriate public participation, amendments to the zoning map should be considered no more often than once each year."
2. Or that the Plan be adopted as proposed, but that consideration of adding a 'once (or twice) per year' limit to the development code be added to the Planning Commission's work program.