



DRAFT Framework & Priority Topics for the Downtown Strategy

Over the past several years, through various efforts including *Imagine Olympia*, the public, officials and staff have identified many important issues related to downtown. Staff has attempted to capture these issues herein, though it is possible some were missed.

One of the Land Use & Environment Committee's principles for downtown strategy scoping is to "Identify a broad set of issues that affect downtown, and then ... Prioritize. Focus effort on what is realistic, vital to achieving goals and impactful."

To be impactful, we have to prioritize, thus not every downtown issue can be at the center of Downtown Strategy discussions. For example, issues such as homelessness and sea level rise are extremely important and should be considered throughout the process of developing a downtown strategy. However, because these issues are the focus of separate outreach and planning processes (spearheaded respectively by the City and Thurston County Consolidated Plan,) they will not be at the center of discussion and decision-making for the Downtown Strategy.

At their annual retreat, the City Council expressed a preference for this fundamental concept for the 2015-2020 Downtown Strategy: *Connecting and Enhancing Places & Spaces* by:

- 1) Reducing uncertainties related to development
- 2) Encouraging private investment
- 3) Enhancing public spaces
- 4) Ensuring the environment and historic resources are protected and reinforced by (re)development.

This concept will frame the focus of community discussion about priorities for the strategy. It will also guide some significant work items recommended for completion during strategy development in 2015-2016. These work items are recommended at this stage because they:

- Are within the City's purview and realistic;
- Implement specific Comprehensive Plan goals and policies;
- Are needed to provide a foundation on which to move forward
 - Will help us understand the dynamics of downtown
 - Will help us shape & understand community priorities;
- Require assistance from a consultant team;
- Create potential to engage the public in interactive, visual ways; and/or
- Would have an impact.



Downtown Strategy

Creating Places & Spaces



Draft Framework | Strategy Development and Implementation

A Downtown Strategy will help foster a rich diversity of downtown places and spaces that will attract and support the people who live, work and play in Downtown Olympia, including the 5,000 downtown residents.

Olympia will connect/enhance places and spaces by...

2015-2016 Work Items

- Establish SEPA Infill Exemptions*
- Develop View & Building Skyline Standards*
- Review & Illustrate Urban Design Standards*
- Review Existing Information and Consider Public Input to Identify Recommended Initiatives

reducing uncertainties related to development,

- Generate an Economic Development Strategy With Recommended Initiatives
- Generate a Retail Strategy With Recommended Initiatives
- Generate a Housing Strategy with Recommended Initiatives
- Review Existing Information and Consider Public Input to Identify Recommended Initiatives

encouraging private investment, and

- Review Existing Conditions for Alignment with Downtown Vision and Consider Public Input to Identify Recommended Initiatives

enhancing public spaces, AND protecting/reinforcing environmental and historical resources.

Strategic Initiatives for 2016-2020

- Clear visual elements linking geography to actions, including possible identification of districts
- List of recommended Code Amendments
- List of prioritized streetscape and public space improvements
- Program enhancements
- Other recommended initiatives

Initiatives will be Incorporated Into

- Action Plan
- Capital Facilities Plan
- Advisory Committee Work Plans
- Downtown Project Work Plans
- Marketing Tools

* Immediate Milestones
Last Updated on 2/10/2015

Description of Priority Topics & Work Items to Complete During Strategy Development

Work Item	DESCRIPTION
<p>Reduce uncertainties related to development: This regards issues that present uncertain risks (such as soil contamination) or turmoil due to lack of clear standard (such as design review.)</p>	
1	<p>State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) – Consider establishing SEPA infill exemption</p> <p>See options in attachment 4 - Staff recommended option is to consider establishing SEPA infill exemption in downtown for residential, mixed-use and certain types of commercial. Purpose is to reduce unknowns regarding SEPA review at time of permit through earlier action. Work would include identification of any gaps in our environmental regulations that we have had to use SEPA for in the past, scope and consideration of possible code changes. Outcome would be code changes to establish regulations for currently unaddressed environmental issues concurrent with establishment of a SEPA infill exemption.</p>
2	<p>Views & Building Skyline - Develop a clear regulatory framework</p> <p>As directed by Comprehensive Plan GL8 and policies, use visualization tools and engage the public to establish which views are protected from which observation points (related to downtown). Outcome would be a development code amendment. <i>(RFP/Q may include additional work by consultants to analyze view standards outside of downtown that would inform a separate public process at a later date to establish view standards outside of downtown area.)</i></p>
3	<p>Urban Design Standards - Review, Improve and Illustrate standards</p> <p>Review existing design standards and processes and identify any code revisions needed to better implement our vision. Provide illustrations and engage public in illustrated discussion and review of potential revisions. This applies to existing and historic structures and new construction in downtown. Outcome would be illustrations and possibly amendments to design standards in Title 18 or the Engineering Design & Development Standards (EDDS). <i>(This piece is related to, but not fully descriptive of the role 'urban design' will play in development of the Downtown Strategy. In other words, we will be considering how spaces between various uses function and connect and how humans interact with the natural and built environment downtown throughout the process.)</i></p>
4	<p>Identify other initiatives to reduce uncertainties related to development</p> <p>Review existing information and consider public input to identify a priority list of initiatives to be completed in 2016-2020.</p>
<p>Encourage private investment: This is about gaining a better understanding of market and development opportunities related to our vision so that we can ensure zoning and regulations are encourage these opportunities and to bolster marketing and communication about downtown (re)development.</p>	
5	<p>Generate an Economic Development Strategy with recommended initiatives</p> <p>Identify downtown's relationship to the regional economy, the types of business/employment that might be attracted to downtown and the fundamental needs of these market segments. Outcome is priority list of initiatives to be completed in 2016-2020.</p>

TOPIC (cont.)		DESCRIPTION
6	Generate a Retail Strategy with recommended initiatives	Gain a better understanding of the amount and types of stores, services, dining and entertainment that downtown is likely to attract, especially with a plan for 5,000 new residents. Where should this retail be concentrated; how can retail development contribute to a high-quality pedestrian environment; how can shopper-friendly parking be provided; and how could this be marketed in order to create a more active destination/experience? Outcome is priority list of initiatives to be completed in 2016-2020.
7	Generate an updated Housing Strategy with recommended initiatives	Much previous work regarding downtown housing has been done. Update and analyze this information to apply to existing markets. Within context of a city-wide goal to provide diverse and affordable housing types and a need for social equity, what types of affordable and market-rate housing are appropriate for downtown, what are the associated needs and what can the city do to encourage these markets? Outcome is priority list of initiatives to be completed in 2016-2020.
8	Identify other initiatives to encourage private investment	Review existing information and consider public input to identify other recommended initiatives that encourage private investment in downtown. Outcome is a priority list of initiatives to be completed in 2016-2020.
Enhance public spaces: Includes actions, investments to improve streets, sidewalks, public art, landscaping/amenities, public spaces, public parking lots		
9	Identify initiatives to enhance the public realm	Review existing conditions/information and consider public input to identify recommended initiatives. Include as part of the discussion next steps for Greening Capitol Way, pavement management, bicycle corridors and continued support of PBIA and ODA Main Street efforts (clean, safe, placemaking, etc.) Outcome is a priority list of initiatives to be completed in 2016-2020.
Continue to ensure environmental and historic resources are protected and reinforced by future development		
10	Identify initiatives that protect and reinforce environmental and historical resources with future development	Review existing information and consider public input to identify recommended initiatives that protect and reinforce environment and historic resources in the downtown. Outcome is a priority list of initiatives to be completed in 2016-2020.

Other Important Issues, Plans and Potential Actions Related to Downtown <i>Although not recommended for focused effort during 2015-2016, the relationship to each of these issues with the Downtown Strategy will be considered throughout the process and some issues may be a focus of initiatives during 2016-2020. Many of these issues are being more fully explored through a separate, complimentary planning or program effort.</i>		
	TOPIC	NOTES
	1 to 2 way couplets	An idea to change 4th and State Aves from 1- to 2-way couplets has been brought up in various community conversations. If Council is interested in pursuing this option, the first step would be to scope and then complete a transportation analysis to identify impacts on downtown and the regional transportation network. Such analysis would cost over \$200,000 and up to a year - why it is not suggested for focus of resources during the planning stage.
	Artist Housing	The Olympia ArtSpace Alliance has moved into the second phase of steps toward its goal to build affordable apartments designed for artists, with their families, to both live and work in downtown Olympia. In future, could be considered for Action Plan Partnership.
	Colleges – establishing a presence downtown	Regional colleges are an economic asset that will be described, and could potentially be the subject of a later initiative.
	State Capitol Master Plan Update (through 2015)	City's role is prescribed by State and includes staff involvement in workgroup discussions. That will happen outside of this process and City has no decision authority here. Relationship will be described.
	Community Renewal Area (CRA) Opportunities	CRA is being addressed by a parallel process – the relationship to the Downtown Strategy will be described and information shared.
	Downtown Project	During 2015, resources of the City's Downtown Project will mainly be devoted to developing the Downtown Strategy, with staff support continuing for the ODA Main Street Program and PBIA. The Downtown Strategy will inform future Downtown Project Work Plans.
	Earthquakes/Liquefaction	Downtown's susceptibility to liquefaction is well documented and new building within this area must be designed in manner that addresses the potential impacts of liquefaction during earthquakes. Unreinforced masonry buildings built before the advent of building codes are very susceptible to damage from earthquakes and are required to be seismically upgraded as they undergo change of use or substantial renovations. This will be described in the existing conditions report.
	Homelessness	Since this issue cannot be solved by the Downtown Strategy, it is not recommended as a focus, but will be described and considered throughout. This specific issue is addressed through the Regional Consolidated Plan.
	Isthmus Visioning	Some councilmembers have expressed interest in engaging the public in further discussion about a vision for the isthmus. Since the Downtown Strategy contain elements that could inform possibilities for the isthmus (i.e., view protection standards) it would be logical for this visioning to occur after the Downtown Strategy is complete, and could be an immediate next step if prioritized as such.
	Landscaped Gateways	As described in the Comprehensive Plan, specially landscaped entry/exit corridors to downtown may be considered when scoping a prioritized list of public realm enhancements during strategy development.

Main Street Program, Olympia Downtown Assoc.	Program will be described, and later initiatives may guide how the Downtown Project will continue to support Main Street.
Parking Management Strategy	The City completed most objectives of its previous downtown parking strategy, and it now needs to be updated. Staff recommends this update be completed in 2016 as could be informed by information gathered during strategy development.
Parking & Business Improvement Area (PBIA)	PBIA efforts will be described, and later initiatives may guide how the Downtown Project will continue to support these.
Parks	Being addressed through Parks Master Plan update, taking place 2015-16.
Percival Landing	Being addressed through Parks Master Plan update, taking place 2015-16.
Port of Olympia Real Estate Development Plan (occurring 2015-16)	<p>The Port's development activities must be consistent with City zoning and Shoreline regulations, but City has no decision-making authority over their plan.</p> <p>Port and City staff have identified possible opportunities to share in collection and analysis of data as it relates to both the Port's Real Estate Development Plan and Olympia's Downtown Strategy. Staff will continue to track this process and seek avenues for shared communication and info – to be considered by City Council and Port Commission.</p>
Safety	Issue will be considered throughout, including crime prevention through design. The walking patrol and other safety issues will be described.
Sea Level Rise	Being addressed through a separate, ongoing program and strategic planning effort - will be described
Shoreline/ Waterfront	Policies and Regulations are addressed through Shoreline Master Program and will be described. Waterfront parks and trails will be addressed through Parks Plan update. The value of the waterfront to downtown will be considered throughout process.
Soil Contamination	Comp Plan directs City to identify potential tools, partnerships and resources that can be used to create more economic certainty for developments by better characterizing contamination where doing so fulfills a public purpose. The Community Renewal Area (CRA) is one such tool. Other tools/ actions may arise during strategy development.
Stormwater/ Sewer Infrastructure	Being addressed through Low Impact Development Updates in 2015 and Stormwater Master Plan in 2016 – issues related to downtown will be described.
Thurston Thrives	This County-wide health collaboration initiative is a separate process, with some goals common to our downtown goals. The relationship will be described.
Transit	Addressed through Regional Transportation Planning and Intercity Transit Strategic Plan – existing conditions and ongoing program will be described.

Typical Contents of a Downtown Strategy:

The following, based on contents of other cities' downtown strategies, is provided for context. A consultant team, to be hired upon completion of Council adopted scope, will assist with the organization and completion of Olympia's strategy document

1. Introduction

- *Describes purpose of downtown strategy and its relationship to Comp Plan*
- *Outlines guiding principles established by the City Council*
- *Describes the public process used to develop the strategy*
- *Illustrates downtown boundary*

2. Vision for Downtown

- *Summary of comprehensive plan vision for downtown*
- *Includes a clear visual element that links geography to strategic initiatives*
- *May illustrate and describe any districts (i.e., theatre district)*

3. Existing Conditions & Trends Summary

- *Describes physical conditions through data and base maps: Land use, transportation, utilities, natural and built environment, cultural and historic resources*
- *Data & trends analysis: demographics, housing, employment, economics*
- *Describes regulatory framework and relationships (i.e., to Port peninsula and Capitol Campus)*

4. Implementation Strategy for 2015-2020

- ***Largest and most important section***
- *Identifies needs and subsequent focus of strategy over next 5 years, lists actions, responsible party, when they will be carried out*
- *Describes complimentary planning efforts and ongoing programs that will contribute to the strategy (e.g., Port and Capitol Campus Plans)*

5. Appendices

- *Summary of previous downtown planning and implementation efforts*
- *Glossary of terms*
- *Reference links to relevant, recent studies and plans*