

From: [Cari Hornbein](#)
To: [Joyce Phillips](#)
Subject: FW: Stop the Log Cabin extension through LBA Woods
Date: Tuesday, July 27, 2021 8:44:23 AM
Attachments: [Black Hills Audubon Comment on Log Cabin Road Extension final.docx](#)

FYI

From: Robert Wadsworth <rwadsrk@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, July 26, 2021 4:48 PM
To: Tammy Adams <tadams@ci.olympia.wa.us>; Rad Cunningham <rcunning@ci.olympia.wa.us>; Paula Ehlers <pehlers@ci.olympia.wa.us>; Carole Richmond <crichmon@ci.olympia.wa.us>; Aaron Sauerhoff <asauerho@ci.olympia.wa.us>; Candi Millar <cmillar@ci.olympia.wa.us>; Cari Hornbein <chornbei@ci.olympia.wa.us>
Subject: Stop the Log Cabin extension through LBA Woods

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Members of the Olympia Planning Commission

Attached is the statement that Black Hills Audubon submitted to the City Council last January opposing the Log Cabin road extension through LBA Woods.

Retaining the road as part of the Comprehensive Plan only encourages others to assume the road will one day be built. The road would cause great damage to one of Olympia's great treasures, the LBA Woods. We urge you to remove the road from the plan.

Robert Wadsworth
Black Hills Audubon

Preview attachment Black Hills Audubon Comment on Log Cabin Road Extension.docx



A Washington State Chapter of the National Audubon Society
P.O. Box 2524, Olympia, WA 98507
(360) 352-7299 www.blackhills-audubon.org

Black Hills Audubon Society is a volunteer, non-profit organization of more than 1,300 members in Thurston, Mason, and Lewis Counties whose goals are to promote environmental education and protect our ecosystems for future generations.

January 28, 2021
Olympia City Council Members

Black Hills Audubon Society urges the City of Olympia to remove the Log Cabin extension road through the LBA Woods from its long-term plans.

Why Black Hills Audubon opposes construction of this road:

Why the park? A primary reason for the City's acquisition of LBA Woods was to provide a retreat for wildlife in an urban area. The park's forest and shrublands are rich in birdlife with at least 78 species identified. The woods provide habitat for winter migratory songbirds, summer migratory nesting birds and a large number of year-round residents.

Recent changes. Since the park's purchase, a 5-acre area was cleared of all vegetation for a water tank and access road. Soon work is likely to begin to clear and build high-density housing in a 10-acre shrubland which supports the greatest concentration of birds in the park. The relentless march of urbanization and industrialization of the landscape make the remaining natural parcels such as the LBA Woods ever more critical. Such parcels in an urban setting not only serve as a refuge for wildlife but also provide visitors an escape into the natural world. Plans to build the Log Cabin Extension road through the middle of the Woods is the next insult to this preserve. Though the current projection is that the road wouldn't be built for another 20 years, this is deceptive because other players will develop their plans on the assumption that the road will, in fact, be built. At that point there will be no turning back. The road will be built.

Impacts to birds. A road through a forest has many impacts, some more visible than others. Bird populations often bear the brunt of impacts. Birds are already suffering from the effects of climate change and habitat conversion. The online interactive document by the National Audubon Society, *Survival by Degrees: 389 Bird Species on the Brink*, published in 2014, points to a number of birds found in the LBA Woods that are at risk from climate change.

Road impacts to wildlife habitat. A natural area is one that has a minimum of human manipulation. Such areas are increasingly more difficult to find and when an existing natural area is degraded through human activities, society suffers. From various research sources we can identify a number of risks of damage to an ecosystem due to a traversing road. This damage can extend hundreds of yards into the adjacent forest in the following ways:

- Partitions the habitat. A number of forest bird species depend on a contiguous woodland for their foraging and nesting activities. A road that breaks up a contiguous woodland threatens those species dependent on being away from a forest edge. Some bird species

have not evolved strategies to deal with outside predators, such as crows and jays, that raid their nests, or cowbirds which lay their own eggs in other bird nests resulting in a loss of the other bird's offspring.

- Provides entry points for non-native plants and animals that would not normally be inside a forest. Not only do these plants and animals become established along the road edge but they encroach into the center of the forest. Wildlife have evolved in conjunction with native plants and insects. Invasive species disrupt this relationship by replacing native foods with incompatible foods.
- Blocks animal travel routes – animals ranging from frogs and other amphibians to deer and other large mammals follow travel routes through the forest. Cut off by a new road, their travel is interrupted and vehicle collisions increase.
- Disrupts water flow – during heavy rainfall water drainage follows many paths that could be interrupted by a road. Often, the solution is to install culverts that channel the water but this also concentrates the flow to create backups and other disruption to water flow.
- Increases pollution and noise. Motor vehicles emit noise and pollution which change the environment of the surrounding animals and plants.
- Affects the surrounding temperature, wind, humidity. Paved roads heat up and affect the surrounding atmosphere which in turn creates adverse conditions for existing animals and plants.
- Opens a wind corridor making trees along a road more susceptible to windthrow.
- Lighting by street lamps changes the day length perceived by surrounding animals and plants. Day length is essential in regulating the seasonal growth and reproductive patterns of plants and animals. Migratory birds can lose their way when road lighting competes with starlight to guide them. Plants can start growing early in the spring become more susceptible to late frosts. Nocturnal animals such as owls and mammals have their activities disrupted by the additional night lighting.
- Reduces nesting success along road. Birds that nest near the road now face all the impacts described in this document including an altered habitat and probability of vehicle collision, particularly with young animals, not experienced with moving vehicles.

Road Impact to/from humans. Humans using the new road or park trails also suffer from the combination of impacts of a road through a forested area. Following are some of these:

- Vehicle collisions with animals attempting to cross the road ranges from major damage to vehicle and occupants from collisions with deer to the anguish of having killed a fox or raccoon. Examples of high incidence of vehicle/wildlife collisions include
 - Priest Point Park – needed to put up an otter crossing sign, apparently triggered by past collisions.
 - Evergreen Parkway -- surrounded by forest, has collisions and near misses with deer, possums, coyotes, foxes and raccoons.
 - Henderson Blvd through Watershed park -- is another site of animal-crossing collisions and near misses.
- Increased noise and smell from vehicles – disruption of the peace and quiet while taking a walk through the woods.
- Danger to walkers close to the road – increased danger from sharing space with fast moving motor vehicles and bicycles while awaiting to cross to trails on the other side.

- More difficult access to park trails from one side of the road to the other– current trails cross the various road rights of way. Park users would be faced with crosswalks, or the city would need to build bridges, such as at Priest Point Park. By contrast the west side of Watershed Park is essentially unused because of Henderson road bisecting the park.
- Establishment of homeless camps – roads through forests are a magnet for homeless camps. Examples include the Woodland Trail and Deschutes Parkway.
- Greater access by criminals – a road through a park provides multipoint access which increases the risk of quick entry and escape by criminals.

Sincerely,

Robert Wadsworth, Director of Avian Science

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sam Merrill". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name of Robert Wadsworth.

Samuel Merrill, Chair of Conservation Committee

From: [STEPHEN GEAR](#)
To: [Rad Cunningham](#); [Tammy Adams](#); [Paula Ehlers](#); [Carole Richmond](#); [Aaron Sauerhoff](#); [Candi Millar](#); [Gregory Ouetin](#); [Tracey Carlos](#); [Zainab Nejadi](#); [Cari Hornbein](#); [Joyce Phillips](#)
Subject: LBA Woods - protect our wild spaces plea
Date: Tuesday, July 27, 2021 7:48:06 PM

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Dear City Of Olympia Planning Commission Members

I am writing this email to plead with you to not approve the connector road through the existing LBA woods. I have been a frequent (twice weekly) user of this space since moving to Olympia in 2003. There are too few wonderful natural areas in our city and this space is a particular gem. Splitting it with a road would destroy the space and represent a tragic loss to the community. As an avid mountain biker I have often thought how this space could be developed as a bike trail park to rival those in Tacoma, Gig Harbor, Port Orchard, Black Diamond and Issaquah. I travel to at least those trail parks once a week and I would love to see an equitable bike park built in Olympia. Olympia is a great place to live and we all need to do our part to protect the things that make living here so special. This email is my contribution to that effort and I hope you can all do the right thing to represent not just your constituents but also your families if they also live in Olympia.

Sincerely,

Stephen Gear

5744 Red Alder Dr NE

Olympia 98516

From: [Maria Ruth](#)
To: [Tammy Adams](#); [Rad Cunningham](#); [Paula Ehlers](#); [Carole Richmond](#); [Aaron Sauerhoff](#); [Candi Millar](#); [Gregory Quetin](#); [Tracey Carlos](#); [Zainab Nejati](#); [Cari Hornbein](#); [Joyce Phillips](#)
Subject: Comprehensive Plan
Date: Friday, July 30, 2021 12:50:11 PM

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Greetings—

I am writing to express my support of the proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment to remove the Log Cabin Extension Road (aka Log Cabin Connector) from the Comprehensive Plan.

While the 2017 City of Olympia's purchase of the right-of-way for this proposed road was discrete from the purchase of the LBA Woods as public parkland, the only real merit to including this road in any current or future plans is to avoid breaking a promise made between Olympia and Lacey.

This promise, made to accommodate increasing vehicular traffic between the two municipalities may have made sense on paper, back in the 1990s when the reality of climate change impacts was unimagined.

In the four years since the purchase of the LBA Woods as parkland, the negative impacts of climate change have become a daily reality. The loss of several acres of closed-canopy mature native forest goes against current science showing the existential need for such forests—the trees, understory, and soil--to sequester carbon, produce oxygen, store water, reduce flooding, cool and purify the air. Doubly insulting is the total clearing of this native forest required by this proposed project *and* the paving over of the soil that would otherwise nurture future forests and protect wildlife.

The goals of the *Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan* clearly support retaining forest cover and supporting public and carbon-free transportation options and infrastructure. Keeping the Log Cabin Extension Road out of the Comp Plan is a sign that the City of Olympia is serious about reducing the impacts of climate change.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Gratefully,

Maria M. Ruth
Olympia WA

From: [John Van Eenwyk](#)
To: [Tammy Adams](#); [Rad Cunningham](#); [Paula Ehlers](#); [Carole Richmond](#); [Aaron Sauerhoff](#); [Candi Millar](#); [Gregory Quetin](#); [Tracey Carlos](#); [Zainab Nejati](#); [Cari Hornbein](#); [Joyce Phillips](#)
Subject: Road through LBA Woods
Date: Saturday, July 31, 2021 2:32:26 PM

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Please approve the amendment that halts the planned construction of a road through LBA woods. LBA woods is a priceless addition to green spaces in Olympia. We are all aware that what few greens spaces now exist are rapidly being developed. Please do not allow a road through LBA woods.

--

The Rev. Dr. John R. Van Eenwyk
PO Box 1961
Olympia, WA 98507

sent from my antediluvian computer

From: jhawk@gglbbs.com
To: [Candi Millar](#); [Aaron Sauerhoff](#); [Carole Richmond](#); [Paula Ehlers](#); [Rad Cunningham](#); [Tammy Adams](#); [Gregory Quetin](#); [Tracey Carlos](#); [Zainab Nejati](#); [Cari Hornbein](#); [Joyce Phillips](#)
Subject: Stop the Road!
Date: Saturday, July 31, 2021 2:50:19 PM

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Hello all,
I wanted to make sure I've registered my strong support for **stopping** the road plan through LBA Woods.

I was active in helping stop the Trillium and Bentrige developments so we could HAVE a beautiful uninterrupted stand of forest in our urban setting...with trails, wildlife habitat, shade, stormwater retention, sequestration, play, and pleasure.
Now, we MUST not bisect and devastate that park with a road.

The water tower really did a lot more damage than I'd hoped, and it's unfortunate.

A road is simply unacceptable~~at a time when we do not need it, the need for it has changed dramatically, and to keep this in the plan is 180 degrees in the wrong direction.

Thank you for doing the right thing on Monday....and voting to **change the default setting from "we plan for a road to be built" to "there is no road planned but we'll study if one is needed 10 years from now"**.

Cheers,

JJ Lindsey
Olympia

From: [Juliet VanEenwyk](#)
To: [Tammy Adams](#); [Rad Cunningham](#); [Paula Ehlers](#); [Carole Richmond](#); [Aaron Sauerhoff](#); [Candi Millar](#); [Gregory Ouetin](#); [Tracey Carlos](#); [Zainab Nejati](#); [Cari Hornbein](#); [Joyce Phillips](#)
Subject: Please no road through LBA woods
Date: Sunday, August 01, 2021 12:48:20 PM

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Dear Members of the Planning Commission,

I urge you to Approve the City Council's amendment to the Comprehensive Plan that would change the default "we plan to build a road through LBA Woods" to "we'll study if a road is needed 10 years from now."

I urge this action for three reasons.

- 1) Our quiet places are rapidly disappearing and with that our quality of life deteriorates as well. A walk through the woods in relative quiet is a markedly different experience from a walk through the woods with the sounds of traffic whizzing by. LBA Woods is one of the few places left in Olympia where such a walk is possible.
- 2) A road will disrupt what little habitat is left for the earth's dwindling species diversity.
- 3) Roads do not solve the problem of single occupancy vehicle transportation glut and associated air pollution. Increased public transportation to serve new and existing development on existing roads is the answer.

Thank you for considering removing the road from the Comprehensive Plan.

Yours sincerely,

Juliet Van Eenwyk
4440 Frontier Dr. SE
Olympia, WA 98501

From: [Mark Teply](#)
To: [Tammy Adams](#); [Rad Cunningham](#); [Paula Ehlers](#); [Carole Richmond](#); [Aaron Sauerhoff](#); [Candi Millar](#); [Gregory Quetin](#); [Tracey Carlos](#); [Zainab Nejati](#); [Cari Hornbein](#); [Joyce Phillips](#)
Cc: [LD](#)
Subject: Please approve the City Council's amendment to remove the Log Cabin Road Extension
Date: Sunday, August 01, 2021 3:05:39 PM

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Commission Members...

Please approve the Olympia City Council's amendment to remove the Log Cabin Road Extension from the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Over the past year or so I've provided I-don't-know-how-many public comments to the City Council that cover a range of concerns--those about process, the need for a new road, impacts to the environment, assumptions that had been used to make earlier decisions, etc. Many were specific. These, and those provided by others concerned with the road, are in the public record and I encourage you to review them lest we rehash and backslide into unproductive debate. To their credit, the Council listened and voted to amend the plan, removing the Log Cabin Extension.

Now, I hope you support this amendment because, for me, it would further signal hope that leaders are looking into the future to bend the arc of pollution and destruction that, arguably, has led us to the point we are today. Heat bubbles--who would have thought? Fifty years ago, I recall such predictions from a growing environmental movement, painting orange- and black-tinted dioramas of desolation. Nutjobs? That's how they were portrayed and we were lulled into an "everything will be okay" mindset. Well, here we are. I wish we had listened. We still have time.

We've given you many reasons to push back on the Log Cabin Extension. They may have seemed to some to have been backyard, self-centered promotion of neighborhood interests. That's inaccurate. Instead, they reflect this larger global thinking. Isn't that how real global change happens? Locally? Where we live? That's where our opposition to the road has root.

Frankly, I'd hope others in the community would speak up about road plans in their neighborhoods. The Comprehensive Plan uses "build" 51 times in the Transportation section--is that really the direction we should be focused on? So, even with this amendment, there is still work to do to bend the arc. But removing the Log Cabin Road Extension would be a great start.

Please approve the amendment to remove the road from your plans.

Thank you.

Mark Teply

markteply@msn.com

360-915-3480

From: [Stephen Daniels-Brown](#)
Subject: Please remove road through LBA Woods from comp plan
Date: Sunday, August 01, 2021 7:27:36 PM

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Hello:

My thanks to each of you for your public service and your thoughtful approach to planning for our city and transportation future.

I would like to encourage you to support an amendment that would remove the proposal to build a very expensive road through LBA woods from the comprehensive plan. We live in Olympia for its unique natural settings. Cutting a new transportation corridor through the middle of it would be a big loss for our community and the great work that has been done previously by the city to preserve this jewel.

If we wanted to live in a Lacey type atmosphere, we would move there. Please retain the unique qualities of the quiet neighborhoods that surround this area by opposing a road through LBA Woods.

Thank you for your consideration.

Stephen Daniels-Brown
2516 Cedar Park Loop SE
Olympia

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From: [Raul Silva](#)
To: [Candi Millar](#); [Aaron Sauerhoff](#)
Cc: [Tammy Adams](#); [Rad Cunningham](#); [Paula Ehlers](#); [Carole Richmond](#); [Gregory Quetin](#); [Tracey Carlos](#); [Zainab Nejadi](#); [Cari Hornbein](#); [Joyce Phillips](#)
Subject: Please stop the road through LBA Park/Log Cabin Road Extension
Date: Monday, August 02, 2021 8:11:56 AM

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Hello Ms. Millar,

As a resident and avid user of our beautiful LBA Park and woods, which is one of the few serene and greenscape preserves in our area that is accessible to people of all ages, religions, genders and ethnicity, there are few communities in our area that are blessed to have such a beautiful and accessible greenspace available. You see, all the wildlife and nature request in return for enjoying a few moments in their environment is to have people to act as their stewards and preserve their environment, we all have grown to thoroughly enjoy. You can not walk out of the woods without being de-stressed and decompressed from our daily routines.

It is for these reasons that I am asking for your assistance to pursue the Log Cabin Road extension amendment to the City's Comp Plan that was proposed on February 9, by the City Council's leadership.

Removing the commitment to build the log cabin extension road through the LBA Park from the Comp Plan and instead, add revised language that would allow for a feasibility study of a road in 10 years, would enable our community to continue to enjoy the woods and wildlife within the LBA park, as nature originally intended.

Therefore, I would appreciate your efforts to pursue the language amendment as recommended by the City Council in revising the City's Comp Plan.

Respectfully,
Raul Silva

4022 Patrick Ct Se
Olympia, WA 98501

From: jandsoly@aol.com
To: [Joyce Phillips](#)
Subject: LBA Woods road
Date: Monday, August 02, 2021 9:12:33 AM

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Mr. Phillip

The southeast portion of Olympia continues to grow and human density is increasing. The LBA woods provides a respite for humans, pets, wildlife and recreation in this congested world. Please vote to keep this area free of any road. That would be a wonderful legacy gift for the future. Thank you.

Sonya Smith-Pratt
2515 Morse Ct SE
Olympia 98501
360-790-8774

From: [Karen Messmer](#)
To: [Aaron Sauerhoff](#); [Candi Millar](#); [Carole Richmond](#); [Paula Ehlers](#); [Rad Cunningham](#); [Tammy Adams](#)
Cc: [Joyce Phillips](#)
Subject: Comments for August 2, 2021 Hearing on Comprehensive Plan Amendments
Date: Monday, August 02, 2021 12:45:39 PM
Attachments: [Log Cabin Comp Plan Amendment Attachment Reasons 11 20 2020.pdf](#)

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Planning Commission members, (the ones I have city email addresses for)

I am submitting the attached document that details the reasons for removing Log Cabin Road from the Comprehensive Plan text and maps. This document was submitted as part of the preliminary application process when this was a citizen requested amendment. The City Council decided to make the amendment proposal their own, so the earlier documents were not part of your preparation materials. These are being submitted as my personal comments for why the amendment should be approved.

You will find a detailed description for each of the following topics.

- It is timely to remove the road from the plan.
- The value of parks increases as our population grows denser.
- The park, trails and wildlife habitat will be degraded.
- Planning the road ignores climate emission reduction needs.
- The park is valuable for climate sequestration and for wildlife habitat.
- Land use has changed since this road was planned.
- An alternate route is available.
- Funding for this road is not forthcoming and removal avoids costs.
- There is a lack of capacity west of Boulevard Road.
- The road would go through the Wellhead Protection Area for Olympia water supply, Hoffman Well.

Thank you for your service on Planning Commission.

Karen Messmer

--

Karen Messmer
360-357-8364

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."
—Margaret Mead

Preliminary Comprehensive Plan Amendment Supplemental Information

November 20, 2020

Reasons for No Roads in LBA Park

Topics – (underlined as titles in text below)

It is timely to remove the road from the plan.

The value of parks increases as our population grows denser.

The park, trails and wildlife habitat will be degraded.

Planning the road ignores climate emission reduction needs.

The park is valuable for climate sequestration and for wildlife habitat.

Land use has changed since this road was planned.

An alternate route is available.

Funding for this road is not forthcoming and removal avoids costs.

There is a lack of capacity west of Boulevard Road.

The road would go through the Wellhead Protection Area for Olympia water supply, Hoffman Well.

It Is Timely To Remove The Road From The Comprehensive Plan.

The landscape in this geographic area of Olympia has changed—literally and figuratively. When the Log Cabin Extension first appeared on regional transportation plans in the 1990s, the LBA Woods was slated to be cleared for 800-1000 homes. The developers of the Bentrige and Trillium parcels were expected to directly bear the cost of this roadway extension for most of its distance. And these developers were expected to pay approximately \$3 million in transportation impact fees to assist the City with its share of the project costs. These homes will not be built, these fees will not be paid, and this traffic will not be generated.

Now, instead of moving automobile traffic through a heavily developed landscape, the proposed transportation corridor would move traffic through the heart of 133 acres of mature upland forest that is now public park land. The 800 to 1,000 housing units are expected to be built elsewhere in the City, generating traffic issues in those other areas.

It is important to remove this project sooner, rather than later. The longer the project is in the plans, the more investments will be made assuming it will be built and more difficult to stop. As long as it is a possibility, the city may be less motivated to invest in needed improvements along Morse-Merryman Road.

We know that building more roads induces (encourages) more driving. As Thurston Regional Planning Council Director, Marc Daily, said during a Sept. 15, 2020 meeting of the Thurston County Transportation Policy Board, “We cannot build our way out of congestion.... Adding capacity temporarily helps things but in the long term, it induces demand therefore it gets more people out on the roadway.” Traffic planners need to start planning for a world with no road through LBA Park

The Value Of Parks Increases As Our Population Becomes Denser.

When the site was to be used for an 800-1000-unit development, the road was perhaps necessary and valuable. A “plus sign” in terms of value. But now, because the development has been scrapped, and people taxed themselves to buy the site as a park, the road is a huge “minus sign” subtracting from the value of the Park.

What Moves You is the title of the 2045 Thurston Regional Transportation Plan. To answer this literal question figuratively, what really “moves” our community through the LBA Woods are trails—not roads. Trails move us beneath the closed tree canopy, around wetlands, and among wildflowers. They connect us to nature, not to traffic circles. They provide peace and tranquility. Trails are for wandering and exploring, not for spoiling with a car. They are safe for wildlife and do not cause road kill. Trails provide mental and physical health benefits and contribute to the well-being of our community.

The road will replace peace and quiet with pollution and traffic noise. Sadly, there is no metric to gauge the contribution a forest makes to our community’s health and well-being.

The Park, Trails and Wildlife Habitat Will Be Degraded.

The existing trail network through LBA Woods will be erased: The mile-long extension road bisects the forested parkland already bisected by the Morse-Merryman Reservoir Access Road. The proposed road will sever existing trails at 10 separate points. Most of these impacted trails traverse relatively flat terrain and are especially suitable for people with limited mobility. LBA Woods is the only Olympia City park with such an abundance and diversity of trails for all fitness levels.

It will destroy the contiguity and connectivity of wildlife habitat. The road harms a valuable eco-system and causes wildlife road kills, noise, exhaust and light pollution.

Planning The Road Ignores Climate Emission Reduction Needs.

This road is moving us in the wrong direction. The goals of the new Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan clearly state that in order to meet the ambitious goals to reduce greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions, our community must move aggressively in the direction of preserving urban forests, reducing reliance on GHG-emitting vehicles and shifting more trips to zero-emission modes of transportation such as biking and walking.

For many years the City and the Region have expressed an intention to reduce motor vehicle use. This was originally a goal because the expense of new roads was not sustainable. Now, an even more compelling reason is the need to reduce GHG emissions to stop climate change.

Rather than build this road, the funds for this the project (\$8.6 million) should be used for transportation projects that support the city’s multi-modal transportation goals.

[The city is in the midst of a process to change its level of service standards – the very standard used to justify construction of this road – to a multi-modal level of service methodology.]

The Comprehensive Plan does not yet reflect the (currently draft) Climate Mitigation Plan. It does, however include the commitment to reduce GHG emissions. *Simply put, if we plan to build for even more traffic, we are planning to fail at the reduction of GHG emissions.*

In the Comprehensive Plan Natural Environment Chapter:

GN8 Community sources of emissions of carbon dioxide and other climate-changing greenhouse gases are identified, monitored and reduced.

PN8.1 Participate with local and state partners in the development of a regional climate action plan aimed at reducing greenhouse gases by 45 percent below 2015 levels by 2030 and by 85 percent below 2015 levels by 2050.

The Park Is Valuable For Climate Sequestration And Wildlife Habitat.

We need healthy urban forests. This road will destroy a mile-long swath of closed-canopy forest and degrade the integrity of a mature upland forest ecosystem in the LBA Woods. Forests function best in large contiguous blocks, not in isolated fragments created by roadways and clear-cuts and other major disturbances.

Recent scientific studies by the National Audubon Society show that refuges for migratory birds, such as the LBA Woods and other urban forests, are critical for maintaining global biodiversity. This major collector will bisect existing contiguous habitat and result in the loss of a closed-canopy forest and degrade a healthy urban forest that is an increasingly important refuge for wildlife in our region.

The City would demonstrate that it is not serious about addressing the impacts of climate change if they continue to plan for this road. Planners and policy makers must consider the environmental impact of clear-cutting and paving a swath of native forest, of rising levels of CO₂ from automobile emissions, of the ecosystem services lost, and of the opportunities for carbon sequestration squandered. Every tree sequesters 50 – 100 pounds of carbon every year.

The Natural Environment Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan includes the following goals and policies:

GN1 Natural resources and processes are conserved and protected by Olympia's planning, regulatory, and management activities.

PN1.4 Conserve and restore natural systems, such as wetlands and stands of mature trees, to contribute to solving environmental issues.

GN3 A healthy and diverse urban forest is protected, expanded, and valued for its contribution to the environment and community.

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

Land Use Has Changed Since This Road Was Planned.

Several land use designations and zoning changes have happened since this road was originally put on the map.

First and foremost, the property that became LBA Woods Park will no longer have 800-1000 homes constructed. This was a major traffic generator source for the road.

Second, the area surrounding Chambers Basin was downzoned following a study in 2006 showing that the flood potential could not sustain urban levels of density. This lower density zoning protects ground water and prevents flooding. This also reduced the potential for increased traffic in this area.

Third, the City has adopted new wellhead protection zones for drinking water quality that include a portion of the path of the proposed roadway.

Pragmatically, the overwhelming sources within Olympia of potential traffic to use this road have been halted. Any traffic modeling would show that the primary sources of traffic that might use this road are from outside Olympia. The city should prioritize transportation expenditures that primarily benefit local residents and taxpayers.

An Alternate Route Is Available

The City and the Region are aiming to reduce travel to reduce GHG emissions. This will allow the Morse Merryman Road and other routes to handle future traffic as they are currently doing.

Morse Merryman road serves one elementary school, and is a major conduit to Washington Middle School. Improvements to Morse Merryman for walking and cycling safety should happen with or without this road. Previous cost estimates for Morse Merryman improvements have been excessive because they assumed large increases in traffic, which is an outcome that the community is not seeking for many reasons including climate mitigation. The cost of needed sidewalk and bicycle lane improvements along Morse-Merryman are much more modest than the \$8.6 million estimated cost of this new road project.

Funding For This Road Is Not Forthcoming And Removal Avoids Costs

The housing developments planned for this area will not happen and therefore impact fees will not be collected. The budget for this road included expenditure of impact fees to

help pay for the road. The growth will happen somewhere else in the City and those fees should be used to pay for the related impacts for that growth.

The Log Cabin Extension Road is a bad investment. The longer the road remains in the plans, the more money will go into projects inside Olympia and in adjacent parts of Lacey to connect to this proposed transportation corridor. In 15 to 20 years, the weight of these “investments” and the foregone opportunities for alternative roads will make it more difficult to reprioritize the proper corridor improvements. It is time to stop funding this \$8.55 million road and to plan to use our limited transportation dollars more productively elsewhere.

There Is A Lack Of Capacity West Of Boulevard Road

The current comprehensive plan description for this road includes a statement:

The new street is expected to increase peak-hour traffic by approximately 60 percent on the existing section of Log Cabin Road (west of Boulevard Road), according to a 2011 projection of future peak-hour trips. This is within the capacity of the existing lanes on Log Cabin Road.

While technically a short segment of Log Cabin Road west of the Boulevard roundabout to the intersection/transition to Cain Road has the ‘capacity’ for increased traffic, the remainder of the street system north and west of that intersection does not. Installing the Log Cabin Road segment will direct traffic west where there are numerous congestion and safety problems. The budget and planning for Log Cabin Road Extension does not show the costs of improvements that would be needed west of Boulevard Road to make the street safe for increased traffic.

The following segments of roadway west of the Boulevard Roundabout are predicted to receive increased traffic from the Log Cabin Road Extension but have serious congestion and safety issues that would result from this traffic.

- Cain Road north to 22nd Avenue – sidewalk on only one side, not bike lanes.
- Cain and North Street T-intersection – mini roundabout planned, limited right of way
- North Street west of Cain to Henderson – sidewalk on only one side
- North Street and Henderson intersection – currently congested at peak times.
- North Street west of Henderson – passes high school, ends in Tumwater at highly congested area near Cleveland Avenue / Tumwater Safeway. Geographic constraints in this area will make it very difficult to manage even more traffic than is already moving through.
- North Street currently experiences morning and evening congestion, particularly when Olympia High School is in session. Olympia High School traffic is not destined for the receiving area of this road and will not benefit from it – the receiving area is in Lacey, which is in the North Thurston School District.

- Henderson Boulevard north of North Street – passes an elementary school. City staff have struggled to reduce speeds in this area and have had limited success with existing traffic volumes. Increased traffic volumes will mean increased driver frustration, which can lead to more aggressive driving. This is precisely the wrong result.

The Road Would Go Through The Wellhead Protection Area For Olympia Water Supply, Hoffman Well.

The Natural Environment Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan includes the following goals and policies:

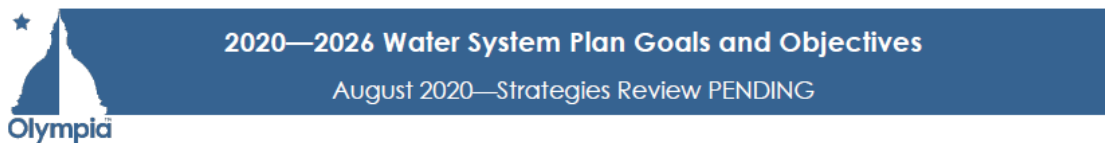
Goal 5 Ground and surface waters are protected from land uses and activities that harm water quality and quantity.

PN5.1 Reduce the rate of expansion of impervious surface in the community.

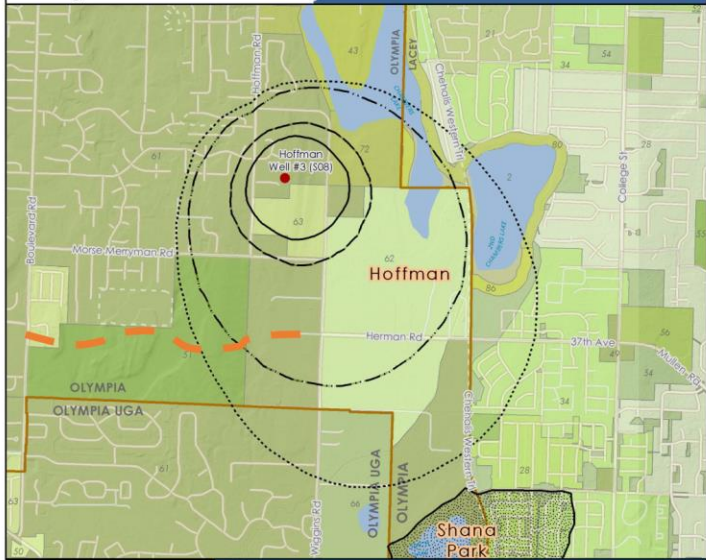
PN5.6 Limit or prohibit uses that pose a risk to water supplies in Drinking Water (Wellhead) protection areas based on the best scientific information available and the level of risk. Require restoration of any such areas that have been degraded.

Further, the Draft Goals and Objectives for the 2020-2026 Water System Plan indicate the City intends to strengthen protection of groundwater. A road could threaten the groundwater through ongoing runoff from road use as well as a potential accidental spill.

See Hoffman Wellhead protection area map below, with a general indication of the proposed road location added in red.



<p>Goal 5. Groundwater quality is protected to ensure clean drinking water for present and future generations and to avoid the need for expensive replacement or treatment facilities. (Chapter 7)</p>
<p>Objective 5A. Prevent contamination of groundwater through surveillance and response.</p>
<p>Objective 5B. Strengthen and exercise partnerships with citizens and state/local agencies.</p>
<p>Objective 5C. Improve program policies, procedures and tools to enhance the effectiveness of groundwater protection efforts.</p>



Vicinity Map **Hoffman**

Wellhead Protection Area	Well Types
Groundwater Time-of-Travel Zones	Source Well
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 Months (solid line) 1 Year (dashed line) 5 Years (dotted line) 10 Years (dash-dot line) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Source Well (red dot)

Zoning	Code	Description
2	AQUATIC	
21	HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL	
28	LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL 0-4	
28	LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL 3-6	
34	MODERATE DENSITY RESIDENTIAL	
43	MIXED RESIDENTIAL 10-18 UNITS	
49	NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL	
50	NEIGHBORHOOD RETAIL	
51	NEIGHBORHOOD VILLAGE	
52	OFFICE COMMERCIAL	
54	OPEN SPACE INSTITUTIONAL	
55	OPEN SPACE PARK	
56	OPEN SPACE SCHOOL	
61	RESIDENTIAL 4-8	
62	SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL (CHAMBERS BASIN)	
63	RESIDENTIAL 6-12	
66	RESIDENTIAL 1 UNIT PER 5 ACRE	
72	RESIDENTIAL MULTIFAMILY 18	
80	SHORELINE RESIDENTIAL	
86	URBAN CONSERVANCY	

Figure 7.5 I

From: [Cari Hornbein](#)
To: [Joyce Phillips](#)
Subject: FW: Reminder: Olympia Planning Commission starts in 1 day
Date: Monday, August 02, 2021 1:30:05 PM
Attachments: [Lazar Log Cabin Amendment Written Comment.pdf](#)
[Log Cabin Extension Lazar Planning Commission.pptx](#)

FYI

From: Jim Lazar <jim@jimlazar.com>
Sent: Monday, August 02, 2021 1:17 PM
To: Anastasia Everett <aeverett@ci.olympia.wa.us>; Cari Hornbein <chornbei@ci.olympia.wa.us>
Subject: Re: Reminder: Olympia Planning Commission starts in 1 day

External Email Alert!

This email originated from a source outside of the City's network. Use caution before clicking on links or opening attachments.

I have attached two items.

The first is my written comment for tonight's public hearing on the Log Cabin Road Removal comprehensive plan amendment. Please convey this immediately to the members of the Planning Commission.

The second is a one-slide Powerpoint, that I would appreciate be displayed during my testimony this evening. My experience is that the City does not directly allow citizens to Share Screen, so please do this for me. In a live meeting, I could simply print it out and pass it around. The goal of a Zoom meeting is to emulate as best we can the function of a live meeting.

Thank you in advance.

Jim

On 8/1/2021 6:13 PM, Anastasia Everett wrote:

Hi Jim,

This is a reminder that "Olympia Planning Commission" will begin in 1 day on:
Date Time: Aug 2, 2021 06:30 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Join from a PC, Mac, iPad, iPhone or Android device:

[Click Here to Join](#)

Note: This link should not be shared with others; it is unique to you.

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8592 or +1 312 626 6799 or +1 346 248 7799

Webinar ID: 886 2688 8920

Passcode: 189347

International numbers available: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kuhugEZs5>

You can cancel your registration at any time.

--

Jim Lazar
1907 Lakehurst Dr. SE
Olympia, WA 98501
360-786-1822

"Don't tell me what you value.
Show me your budget, and I'll tell you what you value."

-- Joe Biden

August 2, 2021

Olympia Planning Commission
Box 1967
Olympia, WA 98501

RE: Log Cabin Road Extension Comprehensive Plan Amendment

I am the former Chair of the Olympia Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, and was heavily involved in developing both the Bicycle Facilities Program and the Sidewalk Program in the 1990s. Since that time, we have completed almost 70% of the planned bicycle facilities, and are making significant progress on what was once a 300-year backlog of sidewalk projects.

I support the removal of the Log Cabin Road extension from the Comprehensive Plan transportation map. There are several important reasons for this:

- 1) It is not needed to serve Olympia transportation needs.
- 2) It is not affordable to build a major road in this location.
- 3) It is undesirable because it would severely damage the tranquility of LBA Woods Park.
- 4) The improvements needed to Morse Merryman road to improve walking and bicycling safety are minimal. They should be scheduled for completion soon.

1) The road is not needed to serve Olympia transportation needs.

This road was originally planned when the Trillium and Bentrige developments were planned, with 1,000 dwelling units in what is now LBA Woods Park. Those dwellings would have created demand for an East/West major collector, and this project was planned at that time; extending it to Wiggins made sense under those circumstances, to give the new residents the choice of departing to the East.

Most of the cost was to be borne by the developers, with Olympia responsible for the cost of only a short portion between LBA Woods Park and Wiggins Road. With the abandonment of those developments, that traffic growth will not occur, and that developer funding will not exist. So we are left with the entire cost of the project, and no new traffic demand that requires the project.

There is very little traffic originating in Olympia with destinations on College Street and beyond. That which does exist primarily uses Pacific Avenue and Yelm Highway, the arterials. We want our traffic mostly on arterials. A bit of local traffic does go East on Herman Road, but it is quite trivial.

There is more traffic coming FROM the Lacey area INTO the Olympia area, but even that amount is quite small. The most recent [traffic counts](#) posted on the City web site show only about 3,000 vehicles per day Westbound on Herman Road. This is less than one-third of the capacity of Herman Road.

Olympia already has more than adequate East/West major collector roads in this area. Between 14th/18th avenue to the north and Yelm Highway to the South, we have three connections, shown in green, while Lacey has only one connection, shown in blue

- 26th/30th
- Morse Merryman Road
- Wilderness Drive (in UGA)

Lacey has only one connection, feeding these three connections, shown in red. Currently traffic into Olympia from Lacey travels west on Herman Road, and disperses when it reaches Wiggins. Some of this traffic continues West on each of the three connections, depending on the ultimate destination.



Each of these three Major Collector connections can carry about 10,000 vehicles per day in the current configuration. The current traffic on Herman Road is less than one-third of this amount.

There is very little developable property in the Olympia portion of Chambers Basin, because this area is very wet. Most of it is zoned for very little development, and the remaining parcels are relatively small. The R-4 Chambers Basin zone requires a minimum lot size of 12,000 square feet, and then only if a special type of drainage plan is approved; otherwise it is a 1-acre minimum lot size. This was the result of great planning commission work in the 1990s, after extensive flooding was observed in this area. It means that there will be very little new traffic generated in this portion of Olympia.

So, the bottom line in terms of need is that there is absolutely no need for this road to serve Olympia-originating traffic, and there is more than adequate capacity in the THREE East/West

roads in this area to comfortably handle all of the Lacey-originating traffic. If Lacey were to widen Herman Road, perhaps that would bring enough traffic to Olympia to need more capacity. But there is no such project in the regional transportation plan.

2) It is not affordable.

The Olympia Capital Facilities Plan has had a serious imbalance of funding and projects for decades. For example, the three intersection improvements along Boulevard Road at Log Cabin Road, Morse Merryman Road, and 22nd Avenue were included in the 1990 CFP for completion in 1996. None of the projects was completed prior to 2010.

The Log Cabin Road project was last estimated to cost \$7 million. This is far beyond the financial capacity of the City for a project that serves virtually no Olympia needs.

3) The project is undesirable because it would harm the tranquility of LBA Woods Park.

The 2002 Olympia Parks Plan called for acquisition of about 500 acres of property, primarily in the form of open space. This was needed because the Olympia Comprehensive Plan calls for increasing housing density, and in order to keep the community livable, we need parks and open space for people in dense housing areas to visit for a natural experience.

In 2004, the voters overwhelmingly approved the Parks and Sidewalks tax, to pay for acquiring these lands. This was augmented by the 2015 vote approving the formation of a metropolitan parks district.

Together these measures, plus a commitment by the City of 11% of general fund moneys, allows Olympia to move forward with the parks plan.

The “open space” designation requires little development. The trails through the area are a place to hear the birds, see the chipmunks, and contemplate the aggravations of modern life. A road through an open space is a contradiction in terms.

4) The improvements needed to Morse Merryman road are minor and should be implemented.

Morse Merryman Road has sidewalks and bike lanes from Boulevard Road to the Sugarloaf Road area, more than half the distance to Wiggins Road. It needs sidewalk and bike lanes along the remaining stretch.

A staff presentation to Council presented a \$47 million cost for the Morse Merryman alternative. They have since walked that back, but it still makes no sense to me. It apparently assumed acquisition of several existing homes for a widening that is inconsistent with the City’s street

standards for a major collector roadway. Images shown at the end of this letter show the entire project area in segments. **Not one** single home need be encroached on to widen the roadway profile to the standard for this type of street.

That cost estimate seems to be anticipating something like a 5-lane arterial, something that is not needed, not intended, not desired, and totally out of scale. What is needed is a turn pocket at Hoffman Road, and some sidewalk and bike lane improvements East of Scotch Meadow, about a quarter-mile total. The City already owns the land for the turn pocket, and the sidewalk and bike lane would not encroach on any existing development.

Summary

The proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment should be approved. The road should be removed from the map. The City will continue to own LBA Woods Park, and can make a different decision in the future. I am confident that will not be necessary, because there is no need for this road to serve Olympia traffic, and there is ample capacity for any Lacey-originating traffic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Lazar". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "L".

Jim Lazar
1907 Lakehurst Dr. SE
Olympia, WA 98501

Appendix: Morse Merryman Road Improvements

Street Segments of Morse Merryman Road needed to meet the City Major Collector Standard. The width of the street standard (sidewalk, planter strip, bike lane, travel lanes) is 61 feet for two-lane roads, widening to 71 feet at major intersections (of which Kaiser is the only one) for a turn pocket, and the City already has ownership of the South side of the road at that location. See the EDDS drawing below.

Boulevard to Van Epps



Van Epps to Margaret McKenny



Margaret McKenny to Scotch Meadow



Scotch Meadow to Hoffman



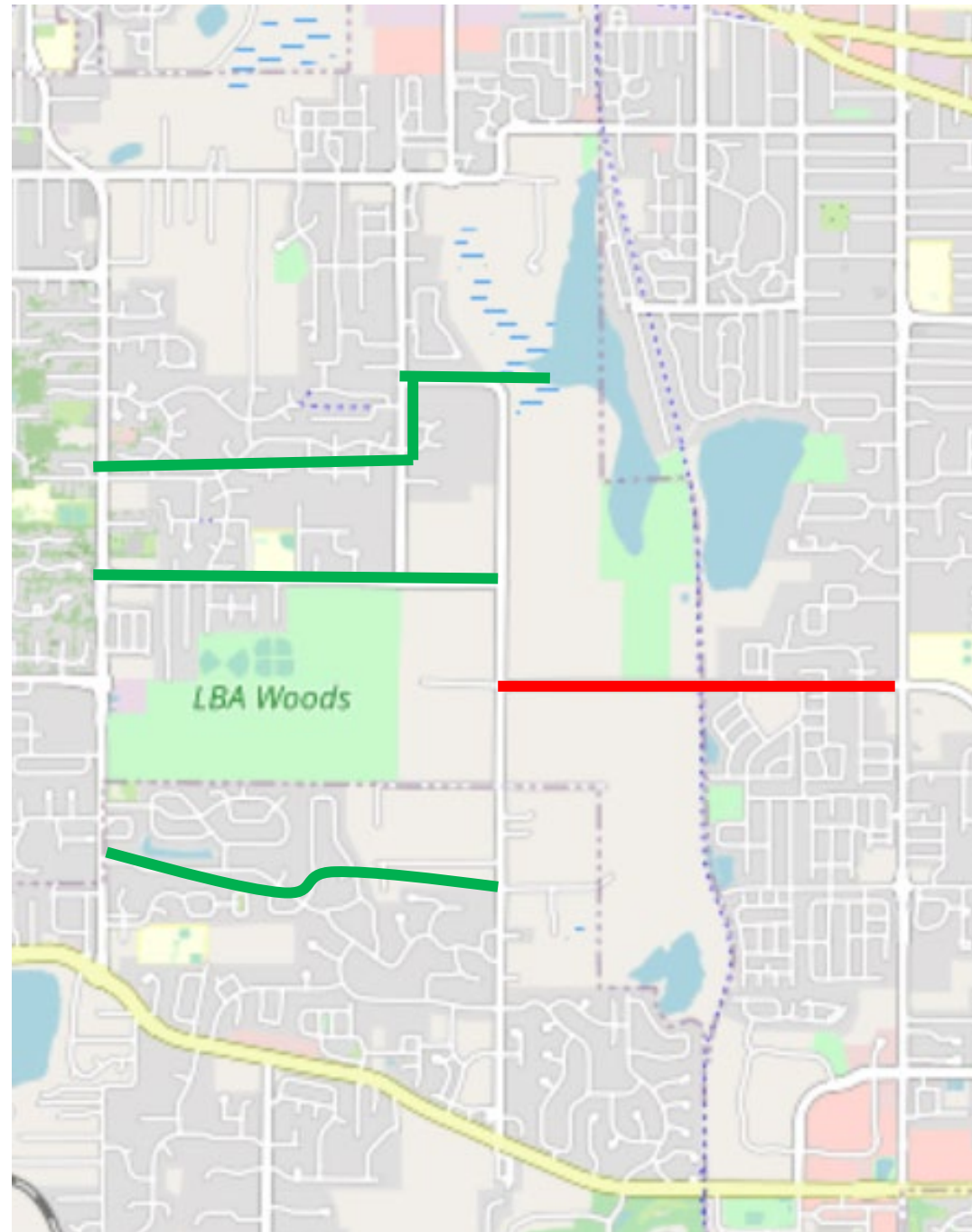
Hoffman to Wiggins



The Street Standard, Drawing 4-2G for a Major Collector

APPROVED BY FRAN R. EIDE, PE CITY ENGINEER	REVISION DATE 8/10/2015																																																												
DIMENSIONS = FEET		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">NUMBER OF LANES</th> <th>SIDEWALK</th> <th>PLANTING</th> <th>BIKE LANE</th> <th>LEFT TURN LANE</th> <th>R/W BEHIND SIDEWALK</th> <th>CURB</th> <th>CLEAR ZONE</th> <th>RIGHT OF WAY</th> <th rowspan="2"></th> </tr> <tr> <th>A</th> <th>B</th> <th>C</th> <th>D</th> <th>E</th> <th>F</th> <th>G</th> <th>H</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2 LANES</td> <td>6</td> <td>8</td> <td>5</td> <td>10</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>0.5</td> <td>4</td> <td>60</td> <td rowspan="3" style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;"> SEE MINIMUM STREET DESIGN STANDARDS TABLE FOR ADDITIONAL DESIGN ELEMENTS </td> </tr> <tr> <td>3 LANES</td> <td>6</td> <td>8</td> <td>5</td> <td>10</td> <td>11</td> <td>1</td> <td>0.5</td> <td>4</td> <td>71</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4 LANES</td> <td>6</td> <td>8</td> <td>5</td> <td>10</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>0.5</td> <td>4</td> <td>80</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="9"></td> <td style="text-align: center;"> ADT 3,000-14,000 </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	NUMBER OF LANES	SIDEWALK	PLANTING	BIKE LANE	LEFT TURN LANE	R/W BEHIND SIDEWALK	CURB	CLEAR ZONE	RIGHT OF WAY		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	2 LANES	6	8	5	10	0	1	0.5	4	60	SEE MINIMUM STREET DESIGN STANDARDS TABLE FOR ADDITIONAL DESIGN ELEMENTS	3 LANES	6	8	5	10	11	1	0.5	4	71	4 LANES	6	8	5	10	0	1	0.5	4	80										ADT 3,000-14,000
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STD. DWG. NO. 4-26																																																													

Olympia has THREE separate E/W Major Collectors serving the Herman Road source of traffic to this area



All of the traffic coming into this area comes across Herman Road, which has only about 3,000 vehicles/day according to the traffic count information on the City website.

From: jacobsoly@aol.com
To: [Joyce Phillips](#)
Subject: Comments for Public Hearing re Comp Plan
Date: Monday, August 02, 2021 4:08:49 PM

External Email Alert!

This email originated from a source outside of the City's network. Use caution before clicking on links or opening attachments.

Hi Joyce --

Here are my comments for this evening's Planning Commission hearing on Comp Plan Amendments:

Planning Commission:

Please recommend that the Comp Plan be amended to remove all references to the "Log Cabin Road Extension" thru LBA Woods Park.

Putting a street thru LBA Woods would have extremely strong negative consequences. This is a natural area that is intended for mostly passive activities like bird watching and walking.

In addition, any need for this street connection evaporated when LBA Woods was established, removing nearly 1,000 planned houses in this area and their associated vehicle trips.

Thank you,

Bob Jacobs
360-352-1346
720 Governor Stevens Ave. SE
Olympia 98501

From: [JUDITH BARDIN](#)
To: [Joyce Phillips](#)
Subject: Comments for Comprehensive Plan Amendments Hearing Item C
Date: Monday, August 02, 2021 4:20:53 PM
Attachments: [Comp Plan Amendments - Neighborhood Character 08-02-21.docx](#)

External Email Alert!

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Hi Joyce,

Attached are my comments for the Hearing on the Comprehensive Plan amendments item C, related to neighborhood character. Could you please forward them to the OPC.

Sorry, these are coming in at the last minute.

Judy

Judy Bardin
1517 Dickinson Ave NW
Olympia, WA 98502
360-401-5291

Comments on the Planning Commission's 8/2/21 Hearing on Comprehensive Plan Amendments on Part C, Relating to Neighborhood Character

I am a member of the Coalition of Neighborhoods (CAN) and I was on the Planning Commission for the most recent Comprehensive Plan update. I oppose the redefinition of "neighborhood character" in the comprehensive plan and advise moving the proposed language over to the Values and Vision Chapter where it is a better fit. I know the comprehensive plan very well because I was involved with its drafting, and would like to take time to discuss the concept of neighborhood character as used in the Plan.

Comprehensive Plans are mandated by the Growth Management Act must be periodically reviewed. The last update of the 1994 Comprehensive Plan was completed in 2014 and is coming due to be revised again. The process took five years. It started with an Elway survey, followed by Imagine Olympia, a series of community visioning meetings. It then had a very extensive review by both the Planning Commission and the City Council.

The concept of "neighborhood character" is woven into the Plan and is mentioned in most chapters. It is used 160 times in the plan. Although not explicitly defined, there are paragraphs that allude to it by example, such as:

The City embraces our Comprehensive Plan as an opportunity to enhance the things Olympians care about. As we grow and face change, Olympians want to preserve the unique qualities and familiarity of our community. We draw a sense of place from the special features of our city: walk-able neighborhoods, historic buildings, views of the mountains, Capitol and Puget Sound, and our connected social fabric. These features help us identify with our community, enrich us, and make us want to invest here socially, economically and emotionally.

Much of our community is already built. Many of our neighborhoods are more than 50 years old and our downtown is older still. These established neighborhoods provide the 'sense of place' and character of Olympia. To preserve this character, new buildings incorporated into the existing fabric must reflect both their own time-period and what's come before. We will acknowledge the importance of historic preservation by protecting buildings and districts and celebrating the people and events that shaped our community. We will conserve natural resources by keeping historic buildings properly maintained and in continuous use, thereby avoiding decay and demolition which would waste resources used to create these structures.

City staff apply the concept of “neighborhood character” in planning, mainly as a way to consider impacts and evaluate whether an action is going to affect something that is important to how people relate to a place.

The proposed definition of “neighborhood character” does not fit with widely recognized national or international planning and policy norms. “Neighborhood character” is what distinguishes one neighborhood from another. It has to do with a sense of place and neighborhood identity. For example, I live in Northwest Olympia. I would describe my neighborhood as having eclectic buildings, limited sidewalks with people walking in the streets, multiple deep ravines, a close-by food co-op, nature trails, and being quiet at night. The description of Downtown or even South Capitol neighborhood would be different from mine.

The concept of character is neutral – the whole idea is not to say what is “good” or “bad” character, but to say, look at the place where the action will happen, and figure out if city actions will cause some significant change to what people consider distinctive or important about that place. Restricting the concept of “neighborhood character” to three elements, and then defining those three elements narrowly, has a very substantial impact on how city staff can perform their work. It puts a limit on how they can consider impacts. It limits the ability of the City to interact with people in places where city actions might have an impact.

Since it is such an integral part of the plan, why rush to define or actually redefine it. The next comprehensive update is slated to begin soon.

Accessibility, sustainability, and equity are laudable goals that should shape city policies and actions, but they do not fit the use of the concept of neighborhood character. They are universal values that we would want in all neighborhoods. They are overarching goals based on values. Therefore, the CNA asked that Council wording be placed in the Values and Vision Chapter, and not be used to define neighborhood character. The Coalition proposed that Neighborhood Character be defined as:

Neighborhood character is an amalgam of various elements that give a neighborhood its distinct “identity.” Neighborhood characteristics are not stagnant and will change over time. Consideration of neighborhood character will vary by the unique features of a neighborhood and includes its physical, social and economic attributes that contribute to its sense of place and identity. These elements may include, for example, a neighborhood’s land use, urban design, visual resources, historic resources, socioeconomics, traffic, and/or noise. This includes design elements of buildings (mass, scale, materials, setting, and setbacks), parking, parks and open space, provision of City utilities, street grids and connections, and street trees.

The City will balance its goals and policies by considering potential impacts to the unique geography, character or historical context of a residential neighborhood to provide the best outcome for the community as a whole and consistent with our values.

Judy Bardin
1517 Dickinson Ave NW
Olympia, WA 98502

Public Comment to Olympia Planning Commission on Proposed Revisions to Comprehensive Plan
August 2, 2021

I support the recommendation of the Coalition of Neighborhood Associations to remove the proposed revision of “neighborhood character” language and move it to the Values and Vision in the Comprehensive Plan. As a member of CRANA, I participated in that deliberation and was a member of the subcommittee assigned to develop the recommended alternative.

Personally, I would like to see more expansive use of the concept neighborhood character, rather than constriction and restriction. I’d like to see socio-economic attributes critical to equity included among the examples provided. I’d like recognition that the value of sustainability means that planning is not just about the built environment but also about what might be called “green infrastructure” or “ecosystem services” present in our city. I’d like examples of how communities of people exist in relation to each other and in relation to the community resources they want or need to access based on where they live, work, or recreate.

Accessibility, sustainability and equity are great values that the tool of neighborhood character can help to open up. But as we know, the regulatory use of definitions is to limit and restrict. There is no value in revising the plan to say that the tool should be put away under all but a very limited set of circumstances. It’s a loss, not a gain.

As I will illustrate with a couple of examples, I would like to see recognition of how open and creative use of the planning tool of “neighborhood character” can actually enhance the public good encompassed by the values and goals of accessibility, sustainability and equity. Overly-restrictive definition

What use is “neighborhood character”?

There are good reasons why the concept of neighborhood character is commonly employed in government planning around the world, and there are also good reasons why it is not limited to specific definitions. You don’t have to know exactly what you are opening next, in order to decide you want to have a can opener available.

As a policy tool, neighborhood character gets down to the question of how to identify uniqueness, relative difference, or user values in a place. Use of this policy tool is triggered by change or proposed change. It helps to identify where to pay attention, and how to publicly engage.

Since it is a tool that is used in relation to change, including responding to unforeseen change or considering whether proposed changes will be a net benefit to the public good, then it is clear that restrictive, inadequate or outdated definitions of “neighborhood character” may miss important facts and exclude necessary voices.

“Neighborhood character” is fundamentally a ground-truth tool. In the Comprehensive Plan it is used many times, and in different ways. For example, it is a reference point for city staff to evaluate actions and policies against significant socio-economic and geographical elements, as those elements have taken unique form in the City of Olympia. For another example, it provides a way for the city to decide when some form of public involvement is called for. By whatever ground-truth method is used, policies or actions may be found to interact with a significant or unique aspect of a place that people will care about.

For that public participation phase, the concept of neighborhood character is structurally linked to Registered Neighborhood Associations in the Comprehensive Plan as a form of public involvement. The CNA was developed, in turn, as a way to help implement the public involvement relationship between the city and neighborhoods.

The current discussion around this question of revising “neighborhood character” language is an example of the Comprehensive Plan doing its work as a living document. Although late to the party, the CNA engaged with the city quite extensively on this issue. After considerable work, the CNA has concluded that improving engagement with the city under the current terms of the plan, while supporting the inclusion of language supporting the common values of accessibility, sustainability and equity as part of the city’s values and vision, is arguably a better solution than including a restrictive revision of the “neighborhood” part of the plan as originally suggested.

Public Involvement Improves Policy

Engagement of the CNA is contributing to a better outcome in this process. Unfortunately, council members who wrote the revisions, and the City of Olympia, missed the opportunity to optimize solutions earlier on by communicating directly or at least clearly with the RNAs/CNA. This would have been a logical step under the Comprehensive Plan and made it necessary to play a bit of catch-up. As a result, there has not been as much opportunity to share ideas and improve the proposal as there might have been.

In particular, in my perception at least, there is still not full clarity about why the proposed revisions to define neighborhood character were deemed necessary in the first place. This makes it a bit more difficult to respond to in the most effective way possible. Other than that fundamental difficulty, engagement with the city has been exemplary.

I hope that this comment has addressed at least one element of concern on the part of at least one council member, which I understand to be a certain level of discomfort with the absence of a formal definition of criteria for “neighborhood character” in the Comprehensive Plan, by suggesting that it is a tool. It’s the can opener, not the can. The outcome of good use of the “neighborhood character” tool is good public involvement and good policy — not freezing neighborhoods forever into one particular configuration.

The US Environmental Protection Agency provides a very useful, agency-oriented synthesis of public involvement in its [Public Participation Guide](#). It clarifies that, ultimately, the purposes of correctly-targeted public involvement are to improve the quality of the final policy or action, and to increase the legitimacy of the agency’s action.

Presumably, the hoped for outcome of this revision process, is to have an improved Plan that enhances the City’s ability to address change and growth in ways that best serve the public, while avoiding unintended consequences or perverse incentives. Better highlighting accessibility, sustainability and equity as values and vision makes sense as an act of leadership. It is easy for everyone to understand and unite toward. Trying to turn them into the definition of “neighborhood character,” on the other hand, sews confusion.

How to Use Difference

I would like to provide two examples of how those values can be engaged by using the ground-truthing tool of “neighborhood character” in more open, creative ways.

For this illustrative exercise, I used just one source: US census data compiled at censusreporter.org. I want to show how looking for “character” difference in different parts of the city can help to “ground truth” application of values and goals, and do it in ways that would not necessarily make the cut if definitions were overly-restrictive.

Example 1: Language Spoken at Home

Census Tract 106 roughly corresponds with what is commonly regarded as the Olympia West Side neighborhood. It stands out from the rest of the city in numerous ways. Although the margin of error is very great for this kind of statistic, one of them appears to be that it is an area where 20% of the population of children aged 5 to 17 do not speak English-only at home. City-wide, 11% of children do not speak English-only, so this is an aspect where the West Side is differentiated from the city as a whole. Looking closer, more than twice the number of children speak either an “Indo-European” language or an “Asian/Islander” language than in the city as a whole.

Census Tract 103 roughly corresponds with the East Olympia neighborhood. It also stands out as a place where a relatively large number of children are not speaking English-only at home: 23%. But the “non-English” language in East Olympia is, uniquely for the city, almost entirely Spanish.

From a policy perspective, it may be appropriate to consider how this aspect of “neighborhood character” can help the city to better apply its values of accessibility and equity in the neighborhoods of East and West Olympia. Targeted neighborhood engagement could be a useful public involvement tool to utilize in order to identify the particular needs of multi-lingual families, but also to help those neighborhoods to recognize and expand their own sense of uniqueness and cultural contribution to the fabric of the city. This may be an aspect of “neighborhood character” that neighborhood residents don’t realize they have until the city engages with them to improve the experience of those families.

Example 2: Fertility Rates

Census Tract 107, which covers Cain Road to Wiggins, has a fertility rate of 8.7% (of women 15-50 who gave birth during the past year), which is double that of the city as a whole and high (1.5 times) even for the county as a whole.

Census Tract 104, which roughly includes the East Olympia neighborhoods near Olympia High School on down to Wheeler Street, has an even higher fertility rate at 9.5%, which is more than double the city and almost double the county rate, with a greater trend toward younger adult women than Tract 107.

On the west side, only Census Tract 120, which might be called the Evergreen/North Cooper Point Tract, shows a slightly higher than average fertility rate.

There are many aspects of the “neighborhood character” of relative high fertility of east Olympia neighborhoods to consider. If federal support for child care infrastructure ever becomes a reality, it’s obviously important to know where there is an especially dense concentration of moms and to engage with them regarding childcare needs.

Another example would be to use the fertility rate data to address climate mitigation goals. This aspect of “neighborhood character” can show where to place a relatively strong focus on sidewalks and multi-modal access to schools. Parents drive their kids to school out of concern for safety. Parental and neighborhood engagement could help to identify family needs and

parental concerns about high danger zones such as particular crossings, high speed auto traffic, blind corners, etc.; as well as the most acceptable and adoptable solutions.

I hope these examples show how the tool of “neighborhood character” can optimize public involvement by guiding appropriate targeting, thus improving quality and public acceptance. I hope they also illustrate why it is important not to over-define the parameters of when or how it should be utilized.

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