

Olympia Planning Commission

February 26, 2024

Olympia City Council
PO Box 1967 Olympia
WA 98507-1967

SUBJECT: Olympia 2045 Comprehensive Plan Parks, Arts, and Recreation Chapter

Dear Mayor Payne and Councilmembers:

The Planning Commission is pleased to recommend approval of the Parks, Arts, and Recreation Chapter of the Olympia 2045 Comprehensive Plan, with suggested modifications below. We understand this update work is being completed in a phased manner, with each chapter being considered individually. We also understand that final adoption will not occur until the entire draft is reviewed for internal consistency as well.

The Commission had a briefing on the Chapter on November 20, 2023. A public hearing was conducted on January 22, 2024. Commission deliberations took place on February 12 and February 26, 2024.

After completing deliberations, the motion to recommend approval of the chapter includes the following suggestions or modifications:

1. The Commission supports the addition of a new park type, Urban Pocket Parks, being added to the categories of Community Parks, Neighborhood Parks, and Open Spaces. This could support having public gathering places, preferably with seating and tables, across the community.
2. The Commission noted that some facilities are not always equally available, even within the same parks. For example, in LBA Park, the women's restroom includes changing stations while the men's restroom does not. The Commission believes, in line with our Comprehensive Plan equity goals, such facilities should be available in all restrooms, regardless of gender. Consider modifying PR1.2 as follows:

PR1.2 Design City parks, arts, and recreation activities and facilities so they are used and enjoyed by as many residents as possible, with equal access to improvements by all.

3. We applaud the City's continued commitment to having high quality parks that are in close proximity of residents and that are easily accessible. We believe that gathering spaces are needed in order to provide for the wide range of benefits parks offer, such as those typically found within a neighborhood or community park, rather than along a linear trail. We suggest adding the following modifications (new text as underlined):

PR 3.1 Provide parks with gathering spaces in close proximity (within ½ mile) to all residents. The distance should be measured by following an accessible travel route suitable for walking or small mobility device.

PR 4.4 Encourage walking, bicycling and other non-vehicular access for recreation and transportation purposes by linking parks to multi-modal routes, streets and trails in coordination with the Transportation Master Plan. Where appropriate, add facilities that support people arriving by various modes, such as a bicycle repair facility or additional bicycle parking facilities.

4. The Commission supports efforts to preserve the open spaces on the Port Peninsula and encourages the addition of a policy for the City of Olympia and the Port of Olympia to work cooperatively to set aside open space for the enjoyment of the community in perpetuity.
5. The Commission recognizes that the Level of Service standards are reviewed every six years as part of the update to the Parks, Arts, and Recreation Master Plan, and that information is used to help determine when additional land or park facilities are needed. In the future, the amount of parks or open spaces areas per every 1,000 people in the community may not be the appropriate standard. We raise this issue now to provide time for other potential measures of success be considered as the population continues to grow within Olympia's existing urban growth area when the amount of land available for new parks or open spaces is finite.
6. Equity. The Commission feels strongly that equity can and should be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan and commend staff on their efforts. We recognize the value of adding goals and policies around equity in our community, parks, and our arts and recreation programs and that equity will be addressed throughout the planning process and in each chapter. We understand that equity is a broad topic continually informed by the empowerment of historically marginalized community members and better overall understanding. To make sure we prioritize the correct actionable goals and policies to address equity in our parks, open spaces, facilities, and programming we support having a specific equity framework or community approach to continue to inform our planning. As the City's work on equity, diversity, and inclusion issues is refined, future amendments to the Plan may be warranted.

We appreciate the opportunity to review the proposed chapter and provide a recommendation for moving this portion of the periodic update forward. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Zainab Nejati
Chair