



February 7, 2019

Olympia City Council
PO Box 1967
Olympia, WA 98507

Dear Mayor Selby and Council members:

SUBJECT: Draft Sea Rise Level Response Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the Draft Sea Level Rise Response Plan.

As the delegated advisory committee tasked with helping guide the draft plan, the Utility Advisory Committee (UAC) has been tracking plan development since early 2017. We write to express our support for the plan. We encourage City Council to adopt and implement it.

The plan is a thoughtful and diligent approach for addressing a challenging, long-term problem with serious implications for our downtown. The plan provides an appropriate template for City staff, elected officials, and our community to follow in the years and decades ahead. We feel fortunate to live in a community that has the capacity and forethought to respond to sea rise and climate change.

We fully understand that our community's response to sea level rise will evolve and adapt over time. Given that inevitable implementation dynamic, the plan provides an affective path to do so. While supportive of the plan, we offer the following comments to help strengthen implementation:

- The UAC stresses the importance of sustained community focus on the issue of sea rise as well as climate change. We understand that much work will be needed in the next few years to begin implementing and funding the necessary responses. Establishing the appropriate governance structure to accommodate long-term implementation is critical to success. We encourage City Council to support City staff in undertaking this work.
- The long-term infrastructure costs of plan implementation are dominated by several high cost projects – raising several shoreline streets and pumping creeks and stormwater flows to Budd Inlet. We encourage staff to continue refining the infrastructure proposals with the goal of reducing costs or modifying the approach for the projects. This will be a long-term element of plan implementation.
- While we understand that retreat from our downtown is not a viable management option, we encourage City Council and staff to continue quantifying the implications of retreat so that our community can understand the decision-making process. This understanding will be important as long-term funding is discussed.
- Some shoreline property owners and businesses will be impacted by rising waters, potentially with limited public assistance. City staff have shared the problem and potential City response with several downtown property owners. We think it would be appropriate for the City to

engage those property owners in the years ahead. Such a relationship would potentially benefit both private and public interests as well as help build a more cohesive downtown shoreline.

- The public outreach and education efforts associated with the planning process have been extensive. In the years to come, we recommend broader outreach work to better involve residents throughout Thurston County.
- Similarly, the project team has involved local students and teachers in the planning process. We encourage continued work in this arena with potential monitoring and research involvement from the local colleges and universities.
- We encourage City Council to fully support its parallel planning effort regarding climate change and greenhouse gas emission reductions.

Our comments reflect our support of the adoption of the Sea Level Rise Plan, its recently completed errata sheet and ultimately its implementation. We understand that staff are prepared to begin implementation of the plan in 2019. With City Council support, we will request that staff provide the UAC with occasional updates on progress.

Please feel free to contact me at dhaffner@ci.olympia.wa.us

Sincerely,



Dever Haffner-Ratliffe
Chair, Utility Advisory Committee

cc: Steve Hall, City Manager
Andy Haub, Water Resources Director
Lindsay Marquez, Water Resources Program Assistant