

June 1, 2020

TO: General Government Committee

FROM: Olympia Heritage Commission  
Holly Davies, Chair  
Garner Miller, Vice-Chair

RE: Revisions to 2020 Work Plan

The Olympia Heritage Commission (OHC) has re-examined its 2020 workplan to reflect impacts of the pandemic and align with City Council priorities. The primary objectives of the plan are established by OMC and remain unchanged, but we propose a shift in focus for the remainder of this year's work.

Completion of this work plan will be supported by two strategies that have newly emerged as essential:

- First, we will be meeting, working, and interacting with the public online rather than in person.
- Second, we will be coordinating with other organizations more than ever before to support and share Olympia's heritage and deliver value for the public. Immediate partners include the Olympia Downtown Association, the Olympia Historical Society/Bigelow House Museum, and the Olympia Arts Commission.

**TIER 1: New Work Plan items that seize on opportunities or learnings related to C-19 Emergency.**

The Commission will give new emphasis to online educational offerings in 2020, with local history information and activities, and technical help to meet needs of historic building owners. This initiative responds to the isolation-imposed focus on everything local—including our homes, neighborhoods, and local history. Ideas include:

- Women of Olympia Series/National Suffrage Centennial (complete)
- Deepening the Preservation How-To resources on City HP Website.
- Research and online content about local businesses in historic buildings.

**TIER 2: Items currently on the work plan that support the City's recovery from the COVID-19 emergency.**

The OHC will continue its required role in support of the permit process: review of permits and applications for heritage register and special tax valuation.

Historic preservation plays a critical role in forming the sense of place and character of our downtown. The OHC will continue to work with the Arts Commission on planning for a fall ArCH Forum and other ArCH initiatives, including socially distanced programming for downtown that highlights Olympia's arts, cultures, and heritage, and supporting future acquisition of the Olympia Armory.

**TIER 3: Any items that are critical to advancing City Council priorities.**

- **Housing Options (1923)**

Our 2020 work plan includes policy guidance for city infill planning and continued support for historic building owners. OHC will seek to promote adaptive reuse of downtown and commercial structures, keeping existing housing stock strong through historic preservation policy, and pursue sensitive infill policies that preserve historic neighborhoods and buildings.

- **Economic Development**

Small businesses are essential partners in historic preservation because their success is the foundation for better stewardship of historic properties. Businesses operating historic spaces offer customers an experience that is an expression of Olympia's unique character and heritage, in addition to their products or services.

Our 2020 Work Plan includes working with downtown historic building owners to encourage new listings on the Olympia Heritage Register, and to educate, instill pride, and to pursue a long-term strategy toward expansion of the downtown historic district. Working with partner organizations, this effort may include short videos of current historic building tenants to share building history and promote their businesses at the same time.

The Commission will be following best practices and initiatives across the country for recovery in historic downtowns and Mainstreet programs and will bring forward ideas to put to work for Olympia.

Finally, this Work Plan includes updates related to time lost in March and April, mostly impacting Heritage Month activities for May 2020.