

# Olympia Planning Commission

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May 17, 2021

Olympia City Council  
PO Box 1967  
Olympia, WA 98507

Dear Mayor Selby and City Councilmembers:

The Olympia Planning Commission (OPC) is pleased to provide a summary of public feedback from our hearing on Olympia's Housing Action Plan.

The Housing Action Plan was funded by a grant from the Washington State Department of Commerce, which required a public hearing prior to City Council consideration. The OPC was asked to hold the hearing and provide a summary of what was heard to the City Council; we were not asked to make a formal recommendation.

The OPC conducted a public hearing on May 17, 2021 to solicit feedback about the draft housing action plan. XX number of people testified and we also received several pages of written public comments. Following is a summary of what we heard:

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*Summary of written comments (for full written comments please see attached):*

- If you want to encourage small builders to develop affordable housing, reduce impact and permit fees, and remove the sprinkler requirement. An average of \$40,000 in permit fees to build one house is too high.
- Concern that City provides property tax exemptions for large downtown developments, while scall scale local property owners who rent, and often have more affordable rents, do not receive the same benefits. Property taxes are passed onto tenants.
- It is difficult to understand how Olympia is impacted by giant landlords who operate across the nation. Nowhere in all the mountains of housing documents does the city even mention who owns what in Olympia.
- Concern that too much is being spent on homeless response without results, and this "plan" does not address housing, substance rehab, & mental illness for the homeless.
- Concerns that Olympia favors market-rate projects over low-income projects. Rich developers can take care of themselves & don't need my taxes to build projects that are meant to bring more rich people from Seattle and Tacoma to gentrify the Olympia area.
- Olympia has stepped up, and there is so much more to do. This is an issue that takes courage and tenacity. Instead of being overwhelmed by the immensity of the problem, the staff and the council keep moving forward.
- There is "a big economic grey area" with an uneven scale of justice regarding housing. A personal story from someone with a long work history who is now houseless following an

eviction and unable to find affordable housing. It is difficult to get a response from or assistance from local homeless service agencies.

- Impact fees are very important for City finances and for fair treatment of residents, and don't even begin to cover the costs of the impacts.
- Concern about the gigantic size of the problem and the solutions, for the significant part, are expensive. Desires a regional approach, and concerned by the lack of engagement and meaningful commitment from the other Thurston cities and the county.
- Concerns about displacement, and that the City is doing nothing about it. A personal story about being displaced from downtown when her landlord decided to renovate and raise costs and how painful it is to be removed from the neighborhood one calls home.

The Commission [Commissioners] would also like to make the following comments:

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The Commission would like to thank the City Council for this opportunity. We are pleased with the City's commitment to taking action to address housing needs in our community. And we are excited to be part of upcoming implementation, including providing our recommendations about any land use or zoning changes and the update to Olympia's Comprehensive Plan housing element.

Sincerely,

Candi Millar, CHAIR  
Olympia Planning Commission

Paula Ehlers, VICE-CHAIR  
Olympia Planning Commission

cc: Leonard Bauer, FAICP, Director of Community Planning and Development  
Cari Hornbein, AICP, Senior Planner, Staff Liaison to the Planning Commission, Olympia CPD  
Amy Buckler, Strategic Projects Manager, Staff Lead, Olympia CPD  
CPD file #21-1702

Encl: Written Public Comments