



City Hall
601 4th Avenue E.
Olympia, WA 98501
360-753-8244

Land Use & Environment Committee

Housing Affordability Work Sessions Follow-up Discussion

Agenda Date: 9/19/2019
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Title

Housing Affordability Work Sessions Follow-up Discussion

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Not referred to a committee.

City Manager Recommendation:

Discuss information and perspectives received at August 12 work sessions and specific topics or actions to direct staff to pursue further ways Olympia can support the production of workforce single family and multi-family housing for households at or above 80 percent of Area Median Income (AMI).

Report

Issue:

How can the City of Olympia further encourage construction of additional permanent, supportive housing, and housing that is affordable to households at 80-120 percent of Area Median Income (AMI)

Staff Contact:

Cary Retlin, Home Fund Manager, Community Planning & Development, 360.570.3956

Leonard Bauer, Deputy Director, Community Planning & Development, 360.753.8206

Presenter(s):

Cary Retlin, Home Fund Manager, Community Planning & Development

Leonard Bauer, Deputy Director, Community Planning & Development

Background and Analysis:

The City of Olympia has adopted a variety of tools, incentives and programs designed to support a variety of housing production at a broad range of income levels. Implementation of the Home Fund and reduction of impact fees for low-income housing are examples of tools adopted to spur additional permanent, supportive housing. Height bonuses, Multifamily Tax Exemption and reduced Impact Fees are examples of multifamily housing incentives intended to benefit for workforce and market-rate residential construction.

The Land Use and Environment Committee (LUEC) hosted two work sessions on August 12 to hear perspectives from stakeholders who design, build, fund and manage housing in Olympia. At the end of those work sessions, LUEC members summarized several areas they are interested in looking into further based on the themes they heard:

- Increased role in providing information and guidance for permit applicants to assist them through the permitting process
- Develop a 'package' of tools/incentives that could be made available to projects producing housing that meets a defined affordability level
- Focus efforts on Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) to remove any additional challenges to building them, e.g. pre-approved plans, re-examine sprinkler requirements
- Consider additional ways to encourage single-room occupancy buildings (SROs, also known as 'micro-units'), especially near transit routes
- Create greater flexibility for housing projects to be feasible, within guideposts established by City

Committee members may also want to consider additional topics to discuss at the September 19 meeting, with a goal of arriving at a set of topics or actions to direct staff to pursue further.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

Housing costs are likely to continue to rise faster than wages in Olympia and Thurston County. New housing development is concerning to some residents.

Options:

1. Review previous actions taken by City, or in progress, to address housing affordability and provide direction to staff to pursue specific additional topics.
2. Review previous actions taken by City, or in progress, to address housing affordability and not direct additional actions at this time.

Financial Impact:

Future actions may have financial impacts to the City.

Attachments:

None