



Land Use & Environment Committee

Olympia Housing Action Plan Update

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Title

Olympia Housing Action Plan Update

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Hear a briefing from Planning Commission Chair Candi Millar on what was heard at the May 17, 2021 Planning Commission public hearing regarding the Olympia Housing Action Plan.

City Manager Recommendation:

Hear the briefing and discuss the plan, making any suggestions to improve the draft plan.

Report

Issue:

Whether to receive an update about Olympia's Housing Action Plan and the public comments received at the Planning Commission public hearing. The Housing Action Plan includes strategies and actions that promote more housing, more diverse housing types, affordability and stability.

Staff Contact:

Amy Buckler, Strategic Projects Manager, Community Planning & Development, 360.280.8947

Presenter(s):

Amy Buckler, Strategic Projects Manager
Candi Millar, Planning Commission Chair

Background and Analysis:

The Planning Commission held a public hearing on the draft Olympia Housing Action Plan on May 17. At their next meeting, the Commission will complete a letter to City Council summarizing the public's comments. Planning Commission Chair Candi Millar will provide an update to the Committee about what was heard. Staff will also discuss highlights from the plan.

In 2019, the Washington State Legislature made grant funds available to cities to develop housing action plans that promote more housing, more diverse housing types and affordability. In recognition of our shared housing market and the cross-jurisdictional need for affordable housing, the Cities of Olympia, Lacey and Tumwater jointly applied for and received funds to collaborate on this effort.

With help from Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC), the cities completed several deliverables that provide necessary background information and identify strategies and potential actions the cities can take. These actions are available on the Engage Olympia page and include:

- A housing needs assessment, including a 25-year projection of housing affordable at different income levels.
- A landlord survey, to better understand what residents are paying for rent and how rents are changing.
- A draft regional housing action plan (menu of actions) cities can take to ensure housing stock adequate and affordable for current and future residents.

At this time, each city is conducting their own public review process to determine which actions to include as they adapt the regional draft into city-specific housing action plans. Each city will adopt their own housing action plan by June of 2021, in order to meet the requirements of the grant which funds this work.

The Housing Action Plan identifies seven housing needs/gaps to be addressed:

- **Affordability.** Reduce the cost of housing for low-income and cost burdened households.
- **Supply.** Increase the inventory of housing for all households.
- **Variety.** Increase the variety of housing sizes and types.
- **Seniors.** Increase the stock of housing options needed for aging seniors.
- **Improvements.** Maintain the existing housing stock, including improving energy efficiency and air quality.
- **Stability.** Increase household wealth by providing safe, stable options for rental housing and pathways to homeownership.
- **Supportive Housing.** Increase permanent housing options for those at risk of or experiencing homelessness and people with disabilities.

The Plan includes over 70 potential actions the City can take to help meet housing needs. The City of Olympia has already implemented approximately one third of these actions, at least partially. Tables in the draft plan include implementation status, current approach, recommended approach, city resources needed and recommended timeframe. The actions are organized around six strategies:

- 1) Increase the supply of permanently affordable housing for households that make 80 percent or less of the area median income.
- 2) Make it easier for households to access housing and stay housed.
- 3) Expand overall housing supply by making it easier to build all types of housing projects.
- 4) Increase the variety of housing choices.
- 5) Continually build on resources, collaboration and public understanding to improve implementation of housing strategies.
- 6) Establish a permanent source of funding for low-income housing.

Next Steps - Public Process

The Planning Commission has not been asked to make a formal recommendation on the plan, rather to write a letter to City Council summarizing what they heard at the public hearing. The Commission will complete the letter on June 7.

Staff will return to the Land Use and Environment Committee for a recommendation on June 17. The City Council will consider adoption on June 22.

Following adoption of the Housing Action Plan, public engagement and implementation of housing actions will be ongoing. The City will also hold a public process to update the Housing Element of the Comprehensive Plan between 2022-2025.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

Written public comments from the Planning Commission public hearing are attached. A report from the March 2021 housing survey is also attached.

Housing affordability and development are major issues of importance to the community. Olympia's recently developed One Community (homeless response) Plan identified building more housing of all types for all incomes as a key priority moving forward.

Options:

1. Following the briefing, make any suggestions to improve the plan.
2. Do not hear the briefing or make suggestions.
3. Hear the briefing and make suggestion at another time.

Financial Impact:

The Washington State Department of Commerce awarded Olympia, Lacey and Tumwater grants totaling \$300,000 for development of housing action plans. Under an interlocal agreement, \$150,000 will be directed to the Thurston Regional Planning Council for supportive tasks. Olympia will use its remaining \$50,000 to support staff work on the effort. Following adoption of the Housing Action Plan, implementation actions may need additional financial resources to complete.

Attachments:

Draft Olympia Housing Action Plan
Written Public Comments
Survey report
[Link to Engage Olympia Page](#)