



Planning Commission Neighborhood Centers - Briefing

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Title

Neighborhood Centers - Briefing

Recommended Action

Information only; no action requested.

Report

Issue:

Overview of the Planning Commission's previous work on neighborhood centers and discussion of next steps.

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Presenter(s):

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Background and Analysis:

Olympia's Comprehensive Plan identifies 17 areas for future neighborhood center development (Attachment 1). Neighborhood centers are small walk- and transit-friendly areas within neighborhoods that serve the day-to-day retail and service needs of local residents and foster community interaction. These destinations are essential to achieving community goals to reduce environmental impacts, improve human health, provide greater housing options, and foster healthy and resilient neighborhoods. Descriptions of designated neighborhood centers can be found in Attachment 2.

Despite long-held goals to encourage them, neighborhood centers have not been developed as envisioned in the Comprehensive Plan. In 2014, the Planning Commission set out to find out why and to help create solutions. Originally, the Neighborhood Centers project included three phases:

- **Phase I - Information Gathering (2014)**

The Planning Commission gathered input about the public's desires as well as barriers to neighborhood centers development. An online questionnaire was conducted, as were interviews with business owners and operators. Results were compiled in the 'Summary of

2014 Finding about Olympia's Neighborhood Centers' (see Attachment 3 for link to this document).

- **Phase 2 - Outreach (2015-2016)**

During this phase, Commissioners were going to share what they learned about challenges, opportunities, and success factors with neighborhoods and other stakeholders. The Neighborhood Centers project was put on hold before outreach occurred.

- **Phase 3 - Regulatory Changes (2016)**

This phase would have involved amendments to the Municipal Code to make neighborhood center goals easier to achieve.

The Neighborhood Centers project has remained on the Planning Commission's work plan since 2015. The City will be hiring a consultant before the end of this year to assist in moving the project forward. Staff is currently developing a scope of work for the recruitment process; preliminary tasks include updating demographic information, analyzing current market conditions, identifying barriers in current codes and policies, public engagement, and developing strategies and actions for making neighborhood center goals easier to achieve.

Additional information and resource materials are noted in the attachments below.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

Development of neighborhood centers was a primary theme during the last Comprehensive Plan update. They were also addressed in the *Sustainable Thurston Plan* and the *Housing Action Plan*; both plans involved extensive public outreach.

The Eastside Neighborhood Association has expressed interest in having a center in their neighborhood.

Options:

None at this time; briefing only.

Financial Impact:

The project is being covered by the Community Planning and Development Department's base budget.

Attachments:

1. Map of Designated Neighborhood Centers
2. Description of Designated Neighborhood Centers
3. Neighborhood Centers Webpage