



Planning Commission

2021 Comprehensive Plan Amendments - Deliberations

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Title

2021 Comprehensive Plan Amendments - Deliberations

Recommended Action

Move to reconfirm the August 16, 2021, Planning Commission motions and votes on Parts A and B of the 2021 Comprehensive Plan Amendments and recommend approval of Part C of the 2021 Comprehensive Plan Amendments.

Report

Issue:

Whether to reconfirm the August 16, 2021, Planning Commission motions and votes on Parts A and B of the 2021 Comprehensive Plan Amendments and recommend approval of Part C of the 2021 Comprehensive Plan Amendments.

Staff Contact:

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Presenter(s):

None, continuation of Commission deliberations.

Background and Analysis:

Background

Under the Growth Management Act, local governments are generally allowed to amend Comprehensive Plans once a year. Olympia has a process to allow for such amendments, as outlined in Chapter 18.59 of the Olympia Municipal Code (OMC).

Plan Amendments are considered in a two-step process and based on the review and evaluation criteria for each step. The first step is known as the preliminary or screening review. In the first step the City Council considers the proposals and determines which will advance to the final review stage, which includes a public hearing before the Planning Commission.

This year, there are three parts to a City of Olympia proposal to amend the Plan (the application materials are provided in full on the webpage, Attachment 1):

- Part A: Text amendments requested by the Public Works Department regarding transportation concurrency.
- Part B: Text and transportation map amendments requested by the Public Works Department regarding future street connections in the southeast portion of Olympia, in and near the area known as “LBA Woods”.
- Part C: Text amendments requested by Council to improve language around equity and inclusion, including adding a definition of Neighborhood Character.

In addition to reviewing the proposed amendments in regard to the Final Review and Evaluation Criteria included in the Olympia Municipal Code, staff also reviews proposed amendments in regard to compatibility with the text, goals, and policies of the Comprehensive Plan and City development regulations meant to implement the Plan. For these proposals, that included looking throughout the Plan for how the term “character” is used.

It is important to note that the terms “character” and “neighborhood character” are not defined in the glossary. The term character is used to refer to both the natural and built environments in various places throughout the Plan. It is also a term that, when read, can mean different things to different people as it is somewhat subjective. In Part C of the application, more context is proposed to describe neighborhood character. It is intended to increase equity and inclusion for Olympia’s neighborhoods as our city continues to grow. Staff believes this aligns strongly with Olympia’s values of being a community that welcomes and accepts people of all races, religions, ethnic backgrounds, and regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.

However, upon review of the Plan, staff noted physical attributes that are used to describe neighborhoods and neighborhood character. These attributes also influence neighborhood character. While the proposal does not suggest removal of these attributes and descriptions in the Plan, staff believes they should be included in the proposed language that provides more context around what neighborhood character includes. The Staff Proposed Amendments (Attachment 6) include an additional bullet point that includes reference to these physical attributes that influence neighborhood character.

Council of Neighborhoods Association

Staff shared it’s proposed revision to the definition of neighborhood character with the Council of Neighborhoods Association (CNA) at its meeting on July 12, 2021. In response to the discussion at the meeting, the CNA formed a subcommittee to develop its own proposed revisions. The CNA request is included as Attachment 8.

Public Hearing

The public hearing was held on August 2, 2021. Public comments were solicited through 5:00 p.m. on August 2, 201 and several members of the public provided testimony at the public hearing. See attachment 2 for all written comments received by the deadline. Written comments received after the deadline have been retained and will be provided to City Council when the 2021 Comprehensive Plan Amendments are scheduled for Council action.

August 16, 2021, Planning Commission Meeting

There were technical difficulties at the August 16, 2021, Planning Commission meeting, which was a

virtual public meeting. As a result, members of the public were not able to join the meeting until almost halfway through the meeting. Although the portion of the meeting that was not accessible to the public covered different topics, because of the delay some people were understandably not in attendance when this proposal was discussed and deliberated on by the Commission at the end of the meeting. Staff believes some of the people who were not able to attend where interested hearing the Commission discussion on these proposed amendments.

For that reason, and to help ensure the Commission's motions and votes are conducted "on the record" during publicly accessible meetings, the Commission is asked to reconsider its motions and votes on Parts A and B of the proposed amendments at the September 20, 2021, meeting. The recording of the August 16, 2021, meeting is available on the City website and can be accessed at any time. However, to assist in the Commission's reconsideration, and to be as fully transparent as possible to the public, staff has provided a summary of the Commission's deliberations that took place at the August 16, 2021, meeting (see Attachment 9).

Commissioner Questions & Additional Information

Commission members have requested additional information in consideration of these proposed amendments as deliberations continue. Examples include a request of Council to identify its intent behind the proposed amendments in Part C (see Attachment 5); requesting information around past practices (e.g. redlining) that have had equity impacts (see Chapter 1 in the Housing Action Plan, accessed in Attachment 10); and a request to have the language proposed by Council (see Attachments 3 and 4), staff (see Attachment 6), the CNA Subcommittee (see Attachment 8), and Commissioner Richmond (see Attachment 7) provided as attachments at the September 20, 2021, meeting to assist in reviewing the language still under consideration.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

Public comments were submitted and have been provided to the Commission. Most comments received were in response to Part B of the proposal, regarding the request to remove the extension of Log Cabin Road and other future street connections from the Transportation 2030 maps in the plan and to instead add text stating the city could conduct an analysis of transportation needs in the area in approximately 10 years. This area is known as LBA Woods. Public comments were supportive of removing these street connections from the Transportation 2030 maps. Some of the comments received were in response to the proposed definition of neighborhood character. The Council of Neighborhoods Association subcommittee submitted written comments requesting specific revisions. All written comments submitted by the August 2, 2021, 5:00 p.m. deadline are provided (see Attachment 2).

Options:

1. Move to reconfirm the August 16, 2021, Planning Commission motions and votes on Parts A and B of the 2021 Comprehensive Plan Amendments and recommend approval of Part C of the 2021 Comprehensive Plan Amendments, as proposed by City Council.
2. Move to reconfirm the August 16, 2021, Planning Commission motions and votes on Parts A and B of the 2021 Comprehensive Plan Amendments and recommend approval of Part C of the 2021 Comprehensive Plan Amendments, as proposed by staff.
3. Move to reconfirm the August 16, 2021, Planning Commission motions and votes on Parts A and B of the 2021 Comprehensive Plan Amendments and recommend approval of Part C of the 2021 Comprehensive Plan Amendments, as amended by the Planning Commission.
4. Move to reconfirm the August 16, 2021, Planning Commission motions and votes on Parts A

and B of the 2021 Comprehensive Plan Amendments and recommend that the only portions of Part C that be adopted at this time are the changes to use gender neutral pronouns and the changes to use terms like resident and community member rather than citizen throughout the plan.

Financial Impact:

None directly. The staff time and resources to process city-proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendments is covered by the Department's base budget.

Attachments:

Webpage with link to application materials
Public Comments received by deadline
Proposed Community Values and Vision Introductory Language (application)
Proposed Neighborhood Character Definition (application excerpt)
Council Response regarding Intent
Staff Recommendation for Neighborhood Character
Commissioner Richmond Recommendation
CNA Recommendation for Neighborhood Character
Deliberations Summary
Housing Action Plan Webpage