



Planning Commission

2021 Annual Comprehensive Plan Amendments - Continued Deliberations

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Title

2021 Annual Comprehensive Plan Amendments - Continued Deliberations

Recommended Action

Move to approve the pending motion regarding Neighborhood Character; complete deliberations about adding an equity statement to the Community Values and Vision chapter of the Comprehensive Plan; and authorize the Chair to sign a letter to City Council regarding the Commission's recommendation on the proposed amendments.

Report

Issue:

Whether to approve the pending motion regarding Neighborhood Character; complete deliberations about adding an equity statement to the Community Values and Vision chapter of the Comprehensive Plan; and authorize the Chair to sign a letter to City Council regarding the Commission's recommendation on the proposed amendments.

Staff Contact:

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Presenter(s):

None, continued 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 multimodal transportation concurrency.

The Commission voted to recommend approval of Part A, as proposed.

- 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”.

The Commission voted to recommend approval of Part B, as proposed, with the text amendments requested by the Washington State Department of Transportation.

- Part C: Text amendments requested by Council to improve language around equity and inclusion, including adding a definition of Neighborhood Character.

For the purposes of deliberating on Part C, the Commission elected to consider the four subparts separately. As summarized:

1. Changing the word “citizen” throughout the plan to “resident” or “community member”.

The Commission voted to recommend approval of changing the word “citizen” to “resident” or “community member” throughout the Plan.

2. Use gender neutral pronouns throughout the plan.

The Commission voted to recommend approval of using gender neutral pronouns throughout the Plan.

3. Define Neighborhood Character

The Commission has a pending motion on Neighborhood Character for continued discussion and consideration (see Attachment 2). Should the motion fail or to assist in any continued discussion on the motion, the language proposed by City Council, as recommended by Staff, and as requested by the Council of Neighborhoods Association, is attached in one handout (see Attachment 3).

4. Add a discussion on equity in the Community Values and Vision chapter.

The Commission will continue deliberations on the proposed equity language (see Attachment 4) before making its recommendation.

Additional Background

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. Staff proposed amendments to include an additional bullet point that includes reference to these physical attributes that influence neighborhood character. This language was included as Attachment 6 to the staff report for the September 20, 2021 meeting.

Council of Neighborhoods Association

Staff shared its 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. This language was included as Attachment 8 to the staff report for the September 20, 2021 meeting.

Public Hearing

The public hearing was held on August 2, 2021. Public comments were solicited through 5:00 p.m. on August 2, 2021, and several members of the public provided testimony at the public hearing.

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 were interested hearing the Commission discussion on these proposed amendments.

For that reason, and to help provide a high degree of transparency, the Planning Commission reconducted its deliberations, motions, and votes at the September 20, 2021, meeting. The summary above provides a recap of the September meeting.

Past Planning Commission meetings

Commissioners or members of the public who would like to review past meeting materials may view agendas, minutes, staff reports and attachments, presentations, handouts, and meeting recordings. Dates the Commission has considered this proposal include June 21, 2021, for an Informational Briefing; August 2, 2021, for the Public Hearing; and for Deliberations on both August 16th and September 20th.

These materials are available by selecting 'Agendas and Minutes' under the 'Meetings' heading near the bottom of the City of Olympia homepage, then selecting 'This Year' and 'Planning Commission' from the drop down menus, then selecting 'Meeting Details' or 'Media' for the dates above.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

There has been a significant amount of public comment on portions of the proposed amendments, primarily about Part B (street connections through the area known as LBA Woods) and the Neighborhood Character definition proposed in Part C. Previously submitted comments were provided to the Commissioners and were attached to previous staff reports. Because it is now more than 45 days since the public hearing, people may present public comment on this topic at the public comment portion of the Planning Commission meeting(s).

Options:

1. Approve the pending motion regarding Neighborhood Character; complete deliberations about adding an equity statement to the Community Values and Vision chapter of the Comprehensive Plan; and authorize the Chair to sign a letter to City Council regarding the Commission's recommendation on the proposed amendments.
2. Modify the pending motion regarding Neighborhood Character; complete deliberations about adding an equity statement to the Community Values and Vision chapter of the Comprehensive Plan; and authorize the Chair to sign a letter to City Council regarding the Commission's recommendation on the proposed amendments.

Financial Impact:

Comprehensive Plan Amendments are processed as part of the Department's base budget and do not require additional financial resources.

Attachments:

Webpage, with links to applications
Pending Motion
Neighborhood Character Language
Equity Language Proposals
Draft Comment Letter