



City Council

Approval of an Ordinance Amending OMC 9.16.180 Regarding Pedestrian Interference

Agenda Date: 12/5/2023
Agenda Item Number: 4.B
File Number: 23-1014

Type: ordinance **Version:** 1 **Status:** Passed

Title

Approval of an Ordinance Amending OMC 9.16.180 Regarding Pedestrian Interference

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Not referred to a committee.

City Manager Recommendation:

Move to approve on second reading, an ordinance amending OMC 9.16.180 to expand the pedestrian interference areas east of the existing "Downtown Commercial Zone."

Report

Issue:

Whether to approve on second reading, an ordinance amending OMC 9.16.180 to expand the pedestrian interference areas east of the existing "Downtown Commercial Zone."

Staff Contact:

Rich Hoey, Assistant City Manager, 360-753-8227

Presenter(s):

Rich Hoey, Assistant City Manager
Shelby Parker, Deputy Police Chief

Background and Analysis:

Background and analysis have not changed from first to second reading.

OMC 9.16.180 addresses the prohibition on the obstruction of pedestrian and vehicular traffic in the City. Within the "Downtown Commercial Zone," as depicted in Figure 1, the ordinance prohibits a person from sitting or lying on any sidewalk, street, or alley between the hours of 7am and 12am. A person may sit or lie on a sidewalk from midnight to 7am to allow overnight sleeping.

Staff is proposing an expansion of the defined "Downtown Commercial Zone" to extend the zone eastward to Eastside Street and southward along Quince Street to encompass Quince Street Village and other facilities providing shelter and other services to unhoused members of our community. This

expansion would help reduce pedestrian interference surrounding these facilities, including Quince Street Village, Rosie's Place, Salvation Army shelter, and Pear Blossom Place. These facilities are all located on the eastern edge of downtown.

The City has received a number of complaints about pedestrian interference surrounding these facilities. Expanding the boundary of the "Downtown Commercial Zone" will allow the Olympia Police Department to be more responsive to these pedestrian interference issues. Responsiveness to these pedestrian interference concerns will help build and maintain community support for the location of shelter facilities serving the unhoused in our community. These impacts, when unaddressed, can erode community support for new shelter facilities that are desperately needed in our community.

As part of the staff presentation, Deputy Chief Parker will provide background information about the Olympia Police Department's implementation of the pedestrian interference ordinance downtown, including an "education first" approach to enforcement.

Climate Analysis:

This policy decision does not have a direct impact on greenhouse gas emissions.

Equity Analysis:

This policy will likely disproportionately impact those living outdoors and among the most vulnerable in our community. Under the proposed expanded area, individuals blocking sidewalks during the hours of 7am to midnight would be required to move or be potentially cited.

Community members living or working near shelter facilities would benefit from reduced pedestrian interference near their homes and businesses.

The policy further highlights the need for additional shelter beds in our community, which the City is working hard to address together with partner agencies and organizations. Given the lack of shelter beds, this ordinance allows people to sleep on sidewalks between the hours of midnight and 7am.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

The City has received complaints about pedestrian interference surrounding emergency shelters on the eastern edge of downtown. The City has also conducted outreach with the Executive Directors of the Family Support Center, Catholic Community Services and Community Youth Services regarding this expanded area.

Financial Impact:

There is no direct budgetary impact of this decision.

Options:

1. Move to approve on second reading, an ordinance amending OMC 9.16.180 to expand the pedestrian interference areas east of the existing "Downtown Commercial Zone." This will allow the Olympia Police Department to be more responsive to complaints of pedestrian interference surrounding shelter facilities on the eastern edge of Olympia's downtown.
2. Do not approve an amendment to OMC 9.16.180.
3. Approve a modified ordinance based on Council direction.

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Attachments:

Ordinance