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Land Use & Environment Committee

Port of Olympia Proposed State Environmental Policy Act Planned Action

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Title

Port of Olympia Proposed State Environmental Policy Act Planned Action

Recommended Action

City Manager Recommendation:

Recommend that Council direct staff, as a 2014 work plan priority, to support the Port of Olympia's efforts to initiate a Planned Action for its undeveloped downtown properties.

Report

Issue:

Should the City of Olympia commit staff support to a Port of Olympia Planned Action for its undeveloped downtown properties, which will result in complete identification of environmental impacts and mitigations that will be adopted by the City of Olympia in advance of development applications being submitted?

Staff Contact:

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Presenter(s):

Leonard Bauer, Deputy Director, Community Planning and Development

Background and Analysis:

On October 31, 2013, the City of Olympia received the attached letter and map from Mike Reid, Port of Olympia Senior Manager of Business Development, inviting the City to partner with the Port to explore a SEPA Planned Action for the remaining undeveloped Port-owned properties in downtown Olympia. The letter stated that, if this concept is considered a worthy priority by the City of Olympia, the Port is prepared to adequately budget and resource this project in 2014. The City's role in the partnership would be to provide staff coordination in support of the Planned Action, and for the city council to adopt an ordinance implementing the Planned Action at the end of the process.

The Port's stated intents of pursuing a SEPA Planned Action are:

1. Reduce barriers to development on Port property by providing certainty to the development marketplace and thus creating a platform for investment in downtown Olympia;

2. Utilize the Planned Action SEPA process to obtain and affirm the community's vision for the Port owned properties;
3. Identify mitigation and public investment opportunities including but not limited to the East Bay shoreline stabilization and enhancement initiative as described in the current draft Shoreline Master Program;
4. Strengthen the relationship between the City and the Port through collaboration on this planning effort; and
5. Generate revenue and job growth for the City, the Port and the broader Thurston County community.

Background

Planned Actions were added to the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) by the state legislature in 1995. A Planned Action shifts the timing of when environmental review occurs for new development. Typically, environmental review is completed for each individual development project at the time a permit application is submitted. Under a planned action, environmental review is integrated with a development plan for a designated area - in this case, the Port of Olympia's undeveloped downtown properties.

Potential significant environmental impacts of the planned development types are identified and analyzed as part of the public planning process, along with necessary mitigation of those impacts. The full list of potential impacts and mitigations are adopted by ordinance of the City Council, and applied to development projects as they are submitted in development applications.

A 2009 study that reviewed Planned Actions adopted by ten different cities in the Puget Sound area states:

"Most jurisdictions reported that the planned action process has been successful in achieving a more efficient permitting process, increasing developer interest, providing more thorough and comprehensive environmental review, and increasing predictability for developers and the general public." A link is provided to the full report.

The findings of a 2010 study by the WA Department of Commerce are attached and as well as a link to the full report.

This effort is also consistent with the City Council's goal to "change the culture of community development". A Planned Action is a proactive step towards creating a vision for the future use of Port property and creating predictability for future development activity.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

There will likely be significant interest throughout the community in this planning effort.

Options:

1. Recommend that Council direct staff, as a 2014 work plan priority, to support the Port of Olympia's efforts to initiate a planned action for its undeveloped downtown properties.
2. Do not recommend support of the Port of Olympia's planned action a priority in 2014.

Financial Impact:

Staff estimates support of Port planned action process would be approximately .2 FTE in city staff

time in 2014 and 2015. The Port letter stated it would adequately budget for other remaining costs.