



Planning Commission

Recommendation on Olympia Sub-areas Planning Map

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Title

Recommendation on Olympia Sub-areas Planning Map

Recommended Action

Move to recommend to City Council that the “Olympia Sub-areas” planning map be adopted as part of the Action Plan (aka Implementation Strategy) instead of the updated Comprehensive Plan.

Report

Issue:

The proposed update of Olympia’s Comprehensive Plan includes a new process called “Sub-area Planning.” Should the accompanying map be in the Comprehensive Plan or the related “Action Plan” for implementing the Comprehensive Plan?

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Presenter(s):

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Background and Analysis:

History

During the ‘Imagine Olympia’ proceedings the public expressed an interest in improved communication and public involvement in the community planning and development process, especially at the neighborhood level. In response to these and related issues, in 2012 the staff proposed and in 2013 the Planning Commission recommended that the update of the Comprehensive Plan include a structure for ‘sub-area planning.’ The attached ‘Sub-area Planning’ summary was provided to the public during the public’s review of that proposal.

The directly-related text of the Plan as recommended by the Commission reads:

Sub-area Planning

Much of this Plan applies to the entire Olympia community. However, this is a large area of

over ten square miles with tens of thousands of residents. Thus this Plan cannot address all of the details of our community. Planning areas, as depicted on the map below [attached], are established to provide that opportunity. The Planning Areas Map displays the twelve planning areas of the City, including downtown. In general, planning areas are comparable to the scale of an elementary school service area with five to ten thousand residents. As described in the Public Participation and Partners chapter, this scale will provide the opportunity for interested parties to focus on furthering the community's plan for these areas. These sub-area efforts must be consistent with this Comprehensive Plan.

Land Use and Urban Design Goal L23: Each of the community's major neighborhoods has its own priorities.

Policy L23.1 In cooperation with residents, landowners, businesses, and other interested parties, establish priorities for the sub-areas shown on the Planning Areas Map. The specific area, content, and process for each sub-area are to be adapted to the needs and interests of each area. (See public involvement [chapter] regarding public involvement goals.)

Policy L23.2 Create sub-area strategies that address provisions and priorities for community health, neighborhood centers and places of assembly, streets and paths, cultural resources, forestry, utilities and open space and parks.

Policy L23.3 Develop neighborhood and business community approaches to beautification that include activities in residential and commercial areas.

Public Participation and Partners Goal 5: Sub-area planning is conducted through a collaborative effort by community members and the City and is used to shape how neighborhoods grow and develop.

Policy P5.1 Work with neighborhoods to identify the priorities, assets and challenges of the designated sub-area(s), as well as provide information to increase understanding of land-use decision-making processes and the existing plans and regulations affecting sub-areas.

Policy P5.2 Encourage wide participation in the development and implementation of sub-area plans.

Policy P5.3 Define the role that sub-area plans play in City decision-making and resource allocation.

Policy P5.4 Allow initiation of sub-area planning by either neighborhoods or the City.

Policy P5.5 Encourage collaboration between neighborhoods and City representatives.

As referenced in the text above, the recommended update of the Comprehensive Plan includes a Sub-areas map. See Attachment 1. The boundaries of the proposed areas are 'fuzzy' to communicate that these are not jurisdictional boundaries and that members of the public may relate to and have an interest in one or more geographic areas. (The downtown sub-area is assumed to be of interest to everyone in the community.) These sub-areas range in area from about 500 to nearly 2,000 acres; with current populations varying from over 2,000 to almost 7,000 residents.

This map was proposed as an illustration to help guide the future sub-area planning process and to provide some sense of the scale and location of the twelve areas envisioned and described in the text. In general, each is an area where the residents, landowners, business operators, and others may have some common interests. City staff anticipates that it may take six years or more to address all twelve areas.

The Issue of the Moment

Although the scope of the Comprehensive Plan update as established by the City Council in 2010 included adding an “action plan or implementation strategy with performance measures,” progress on that piece has been slower than on the Plan itself. (Note, the specific name for this Plan-implementing-guide is still in doubt - ‘Action Plan’ is used in this report for simplicity.) Thus in 2012 City staff was of the opinion that to help guide the upcoming sub-area planning process the related map should be within the Comprehensive Plan.

On November 4, 2013, representatives of the Coalition of Neighborhood Associations appeared before the Commission to address the topic of sub-area planning. Included in the comments was a proposal that the Sub-areas map should not be included in the Comprehensive Plan, but would be more appropriately incorporated into the Action Plan when that document is final.

If the Sub-areas map is included in the Comprehensive Plan it would be a ‘Growth Management Act (GMA) document’ and could only be amended once each year following a specified public process. It is anticipated that the Action Plan will also be a Council approved document, but that it will not be a ‘GMA-document’- thus the Action Plan could be amended more often, possibly without a public hearing, it would not be binding on other public agencies, and would not be subject to appeal to the State’s Growth Management Hearings Board.

The City Council’s work program for 2014 includes adoption of the updated Comprehensive Plan in the first half of the year, followed soon thereafter by adoption of the implementing action plan. Pursuant to a memorandum of understanding, the Coalition of Neighborhood Associations has recommended that ‘Area A’ - northeast of downtown - should be the first ‘pilot’ sub-area for the new process. The City’s experience with this first effort will be used to determine the appropriate approach to the remaining areas, including potential adjustments to the geography of the subareas.

To provide flexibility, and because it now appears that the Action Plan will be adopted soon after the Comprehensive Plan, the City staff is also now of the opinion that this map would be better located in the Action Plan than the Comprehensive Plan. Because the staff’s opinion has changed and this question is likely to be presented to the City Council early next year, the Commission may choose to offer a comment or recommendation on the topic as well.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

Members of the public and special interest organizations have commented on this issue directly and indirectly during the Imagine Olympia proceedings. See note above regarding Coalition of Neighborhood Associations position on the issue.

Options:

1. Recommend that the Sub-areas map be in the Comprehensive Plan (or take no action).

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2. Recommend that the Sub-areas map be in the Action Plan, instead.
3. Recommend that a Sub-areas map not be adopted by the City.
4. Expressly defer to the Council on this issue.

Financial Impact:

None identified.