



City Hall
601 4th Avenue E.
Olympia, WA 98501
360-753-8244

City Council

Approval of Recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners for the Medela Joint Olympia/Thurston Comprehensive Plan Amendment and Site Specific Rezone

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Title

Approval of Recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners for the Medela Joint Olympia/Thurston Comprehensive Plan Amendment and Site Specific Rezone

Recommended Action

Olympia Planning Commission (OPC) Recommendation:

Recommend that the City Council forward a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners that the proposed area be rezoned from Residential 4-8 units per acre (R4-8) to Residential Multi-Family 18 Units per Acre (RM 18) (as proposed by applicant.)

City Manager Recommendation:

Move to recommend to the Board of County Commissioners that the proposed area be rezoned from Residential 4-8 units per acre (R4-8) to Residential Multi-Family 18 Units per Acre (RM 18).

Report

Issue:

Following a briefing from City and County staff, the City Council will deliberate on a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners on a proposed joint Thurston/Olympia Comprehensive Plan amendment and site specific rezone for 9.01 acres in Olympia's Urban Growth Area (UGA). The area, referred to as "Medela," is located east of Boulevard Road between Pacific Avenue and Interstate 5 (see attached map.)

Staff Contact:

Amy Buckler, Associate Planner, Community Planning & Development (CP&D)
360.570.5847

Presenter(s):

Amy Buckler
Christy Osborne, Associate Planner, Thurston County

Background and Analysis:

The City Council annually reviews proposals for amendments to the Comprehensive Plan. Proposals are submitted by private applicants or City or County staff.

The 2012 amendment docket included a proposal from a private applicant referred to as the Medela Olympia/Thurston Joint Plan Amendment and Rezone. In their proposal, Medela Group, LLC requests approval of a site specific land use change and rezone for 9.01± acres located east of Boulevard Road, south of Pacific Avenue and north of Interstate-5. The proposal is to change the land use and zoning of this area from Residential Four to Eight Units per Acre (R 4-8) to Residential Multifamily Eighteen Units per Acre (RM-18).

The Olympia City Council held a public hearing on Medela on November 5, 2012, and closed the record for this matter. The Council then placed any further deliberation on hold pending an appeal of the County's SEPA (environmental review) determination. On April 10, 2013, following a public hearing and subsequent recommendation by the County's Hearing Examiner, the Board of County Commissioners upheld the SEPA Determination of Non-Significance (DNS) and denied the appeal. The Commissioners have now asked the Olympia City Council to complete their deliberation and provide them with a recommendation prior to their decision tentatively scheduled for late January or early February 2014. Council's decision in this matter is based on the record that was compiled at the conclusion of the public hearing held on November 5, 2012.

Joint Planning Process

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires most counties and the cities within them to designate urban growth areas (UGA's). These areas include the incorporated city and an unincorporated area planned for future annexation. Urban growth is to be encouraged within the UGA, while areas outside the UGA are to be rural in order to protect habitat, agriculture and other important lands.

Thurston County and the City of Olympia jointly plan for areas within Olympia's unincorporated UGA. Accordingly, applicable sections of Olympia's comprehensive plan are jointly adopted by Thurston County. These sections are referred to as "the Joint Plan."

The process used for this application is as follows:

- City and County staff assist each other in review of proposals, development of a staff recommendation and various associated tasks. (*The County is lead on the Medela review.*)
- County and City Planning Commissions hold a joint public hearing, then forward separate recommendations to their elected officials.
- The City Council makes a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners.
- The Board of County Commissioners issues a final decision.

The jointly adopted plan and zoning will serve as the basis for County planning decisions, as the pre-annexation comprehensive plan for the city to use when annexations are proposed, and as the City's pre-annexation zoning.

Policy LU 5.1 in Olympia's Comprehensive Plan regarding the UGA states, "... Establish the same zones in both the county and city (pre-annexation zoning) to provide predictability for property owners and the public, and to facilitate utility and transportation planning." The purpose of this provision is to spare the larger community the expense of retrofitting development to meet urban standards (water, sewer, stormwater, roadways) upon eventual annexation.

How the Proposal Relates to Development Review

Although this proposed rezone is identified for a specific area, it is considered a non-project action because it is a change to the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Map, and is not associated with a specific project. A decision in this matter does not equate to a development permit. Regardless of the decision, any future development permits will be subject to review for compliance with applicable regulations and a project-level SEPA (environmental) review.

Because there is a range of potential development options for a particular zone, realistic impacts or proper mitigation cannot be known until a specific project request is made. Specific associated impacts (noise, traffic, environmental protection, design) and mitigation would be assessed once a specific project has been submitted.

The City and County have adopted consistent (but not quite identical) regulations for areas in the unincorporated UGA. As long as this property is within County jurisdiction, any permits (except water and sewer extensions) will be handled by the County and subject to the County's development standards. If this property is annexed into the City as part of the proposed Boulevard Island Annexation first, the permits will be handled by the City and subject to the City's development standards.

How the Proposal Relates to the Boulevard/I-5 Annexation

Currently, the City is considering an Interlocal Agreement to annex a 205 acre unincorporated island near I-5 and Boulevard Road. If the Interlocal process maintains its current timeline, it is expected an annexation agreement may be reached by late spring/early summer 2014. Meanwhile, Thurston County has requested the City Council's recommendation on the Medela joint plan amendment/rezone by the end of January 2014 in anticipation of their decision soon thereafter.

The process and decision-making criteria for the joint plan amendment/rezone and annexation are separate. It should be noted that the area will be served with City transportation, utility and emergency services according to the proposed Interlocal agreement. Staff has not found any technical reasons why either proposed option in the Medela staff report would affect the annexation process or criteria.

How the Proposal Relates to the Comprehensive Plan Update

The Medela joint plan amendment was placed on the County's official comprehensive plan docket in 2009, and was reviewed under the currently adopted joint plan. Accordingly, the recommended draft of the Olympia Comprehensive Plan Update, for which the City Council will hold a study session on January 21, is not relevant to the Medela decision.

The particular area referred to as Medela was not a primary focus of the Olympia Planning Commission's discussion regarding the Comprehensive Plan Update. However, it may be helpful to know that their final recommendation on Future Land Use for this area is generally consistent with

the proposed land use.

If the County moves forward with the rezone, 9th Avenue between Boulevard Road and Chambers Street from 'Local Access Street' to 'Neighborhood Collector' will need to be reclassified. OPC and staff would recommend this reclassification for internal Plan consistency.

Land Use Analysis of Proposal

Attached

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

Primary concerns include:

- Neighborhood safety and character (compatibility with existing single family development)
- Flooding and impacts to critical areas including Indian Creek
- Impacts to wildlife habitat, deer herd
- Traffic concerns, ingress and egress to and from site
- Pedestrian and bicycle safety
- Impacts to adjacent cemetery property
- Air and noise impacts from I-5
- Impacts to a home on 7th Ave on the historic register

All written public comments received by the City and County are attached.

Written notice of this item on the January 7, 2014 City Council agenda was sent to parties of record, and properties and neighborhood organizations within 300' on December 20, 2013.

Options:

1. Move to recommend to the Board of County Commissioners that the proposed area be rezoned from Residential 4-8 units per acre (R4-8) to Residential Multi-Family 18 Units per Acre (RM 18).
2. Move to recommend to the Board of County Commissioners that the rezone request not be granted.

Financial Impact:

Review process included in base budget