



City Hall  
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## City Council

### Approval of Ordinance Adopting a “Civic Center” Drug Free Zone

**Agenda Date:** 4/15/2014  
**Agenda Item Number:** 4.M  
**File Number:** 14-0151

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**Type:** ordinance **Version:** 3 **Status:** Passed

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**Title**

Approval of Ordinance Adopting a “Civic Center” Drug Free Zone

**Recommended Action**

**Committee Recommendation:**

Land Use and Environment Committee recommends approving the attached ordinance creating a “Civic Center” Drug Free Zone.

**City Manager Recommendation:**

Move to approve on second reading the attached ordinance creating a “Civic Center” Drug Free Zone, as recommended by the Land Use and Environment Committee.

*Note: Attachment #3 is the updated sign. Based on Council’s guidance at 1<sup>st</sup> reading the header “Drug Free Zone” is removed. The sign header now says “Notice.”*

**Report**

**Issue:**

The downtown core is experiencing an increase in crimes related to drug use. Law enforcement is using a variety of tactics to combat the crime. Establishing Drug Free Zones around 5 specific civic centers in the downtown area will give law enforcement other tools for addressing undesirable behavior.

**Staff Contact:**

Ronnie Roberts, Chief of Police, 360.753.8409[

**Presenter(s):**

Chief Ronnie Roberts, Olympia Police Department  
Thurston County Prosecuting Attorney Jon Tunheim

**Background and Analysis:**

Over the last two years there has been a growing trend in drug related crime in the downtown core. The police department, as well as other city departments and staff, have heard strong feedback and criticism related to the chronic drug problem. Citizen complaints of open air drug dealing, drug use and discarded needles have generated a perception of a lack of commitment by law enforcement and

the city to address these negative downtown behaviors.

In partnership with other local law enforcement and criminal justice agencies, a number of strategies have been identified to reduce the impact on drugs in our broader regional community. A particular focus of these efforts is our own downtown area.

Thurston County Prosecutor Jon Tunheim has dedicated a felony-level prosecutor to oversee prosecution of all felony criminal cases in the downtown core. The Thurston County Narcotics Task Force has pledged their support to investigate drug crimes in Olympia in addition to their larger drug distribution investigations. The Olympia Police Department has increased its presence downtown with two foot patrol officers and additional patrol services.

The designation of drug free zones is another tool that can be used to reduce crime in the downtown. State law currently designates schools, parks and transit centers as drug free zones. Local governing authorities are permitted to designate drug free zones around civic centers, as well. The zones encompass the designated property plus a 1000 foot perimeter surrounding the property. Selecting five key centers in downtown Olympia will ensure that the majority of downtown falls within a drug free zone.

Regional law enforcement leaders believe the creation of drug free zones around civic centers will aid the efforts to address drug crime behavior. The creation of drug free zones enables law enforcement to refer charges to the prosecutor's office that in turn can increase penalties for those convicted of drug crimes in these zones. While enhanced penalties are not appropriate in all cases, repeated violations or chronic drug crime offenders could be subject to longer incarceration, be referred to drug court, face increased sanctions, or be subjected to court exclusion orders restricting their access to our downtown area. In addition to these impacts on violators, we believe the creation of drug free zones makes a positive statement about the kind of behaviors that are acceptable, and not acceptable, in our downtown core.

The attached map identifies the suggested civic centers for drug free zone designation and the zone coverage. The facilities identified as potential drug free zones include the Washington Center for Performing Arts, the Olympia Center, the Hands on Children Museum, the Olympia Timberland Regional Library, and the Olympia City Hall. All of these facilities are accessed by adults and children for education, enrichment and entertainment opportunities. Drug use is completely incompatible with these community activities.

**Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):**

The Olympia Downtown Association (ODA), the Parking and Business Improvement Area (PBIA), numerous downtown business owners, and citizens have expressed significant concern about drug use and anti-social behavior in the downtown. They have expressed an interest in the City taking action to curb such behavior.

**Options:**

Approve or do not approve the recommended ordinance.

**Financial Impact:**

NA