



City Council

Comprehensive Plan Policies Regarding Rezoning Criteria and High Density Neighborhoods Minimum Density Requirements

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Title

Comprehensive Plan Policies Regarding Rezoning Criteria and High Density Neighborhoods Minimum Density Requirements

Recommended Action

City Manager Recommendation:

Recommend to City Council that the following edits to the December 2013 Final Draft Comprehensive Plan be included in a Public Hearing Draft Comprehensive Plan:

1. Revise the text on pages 56-57 addressing proposed rezones as follows to refer to topics that should be addressed in future development code amendments that govern rezones:
Proposed rezones shall meet criteria to be adopted into the Olympia Municipal Code that address:
 1. Consistency with the comprehensive plan.
 2. Consistency with the city's development regulations that implement the comprehensive plan.
 3. Consideration of adjoining zoning districts
 4. Adequacy of infrastructure in light of development potential of the proposed zoning.
2. Revise the text on page 97 addressing High-Density Neighborhoods overlay:
High Density Neighborhoods are multi-family residential, commercial and mixed use neighborhoods with a goal of densities of at least 25 dwelling units per acre for single-use residential developments. Specific zoning may provide for densities higher than 25 units per acre, but not less than 15 units per acre.

Report

Issue:

Should the Olympia Comprehensive Plan contain detailed rezoning criteria? What is an appropriate minimum density for residential development in a High-Density Neighborhood Overlay Zone?

Staff Contact:

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Presenter(s):

Leonard Bauer, Deputy Director, Community Planning and Development

Background and Analysis:

At its February 25, 2014, meeting, the City Council referred five issues in the Draft Olympia Comprehensive Plan to Land Use and Environment Committee for a recommendation. Two of those issues are scheduled for consideration at this meeting:

1. Criteria for Approval of Proposed Rezones
2. High Density Neighborhoods Minimum Density Requirement

Criteria for Approval of Proposed Rezones

The current comprehensive plan includes 34 categories of land use designations, each of which corresponds directly with a single zoning district that implements it. A request for a change in zoning district also required a comprehensive plan amendment.

The Draft Plan's Future Land Use Map aggregates the 34 land use designations into 15 categories, without recommending any changes to the number of zoning districts. As a result, most of the land use categories will have multiple zoning districts that could implement them. (See the attachment "Draft Corresponding Zoning Districts to Proposed Future Land Use Designations" for an initial assessment of which zoning districts would correspond to each land use designation.)

Under the Draft Plan, property owners could request changes to the zoning for their property without also needing to request a comprehensive plan amendment. This could lead to an increase in requests from property owners for rezones.

The city code currently contains the following decision criteria for rezone requests (OMC 18.59.050):

- A. The rezone is consistent with an approved amendment to the future land use map.
- B. The rezone is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan; and
- C. The rezone will maintain the public health, safety, or welfare; and
- D. The rezone is warranted in order to achieve consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, or because of a need for additional property in the proposed land use district classification, or because the proposed zoning classification is appropriate for reasonable development of the subject property; and
- E. The rezone will not be materially detrimental to uses or property in the immediate vicinity of the subject property.

The Planning Commission recommends additional criteria in the Draft Comprehensive Plan to guide future rezone requests. Staff agrees, but recommends the Comprehensive Plan not contain the detailed criteria; instead, that it provide guidance for developing that criteria as an amendment to the city code.

An attachment to this staff report contains a comparison of the Comprehensive Plan text

recommended by the Planning Commission and the City Manager.

High Density Neighborhoods Minimum Density Requirement

High-density Neighborhood overlay zones are recommended in the Draft Plan for three areas: Downtown Olympia; Pacific Ave/Martin Way/Lilly Road triangle; and the Capital Mall vicinity. The overlay would concentrate high-density residential uses mixed with commercial uses, which would directly serve the residents and allow people to meet their daily needs without traveling outside their neighborhoods. These neighborhoods would transition from their current automobile orientation to becoming more walkable.

The Draft Plan would require a minimum density of 25 units per acre in this overlay zone for new development that includes residential uses:

High Density Neighborhoods are multi-family residential, commercial and mixed use neighborhoods with densities of at least 25 dwelling units per acre. Specific zoning may provide for densities higher than 25 units per acre.

To date, the Olympia real estate market has primarily supported multi-family development at a lesser density than 25 units per acre. This type of development is usually two stories and includes surface parking. For example:

- Casa Madrona, 3948 Martin Way - 20 units per acre; 2 stories, surface parking with a community center building

Achievement of at least 25 units per acre has typically been dependent on the height of the building being 3 stories or taller, and either structured parking or minimal off-street parking. Higher density of units are needed to support the higher costs for this type of construction. A few examples in Olympia:

- Boardwalk Apartments, Capital Way and Thurston Avenue - 64 units per acre; 4 stories with a small surface parking lot.
- Capital Steps, 623 Eastside Street (across from Olympia School District Knox Administration Building) - 26 units on 14,000 square feet (about 80 units per acre); 3 stories with structured parking below.

Restricting residential development to at least 25 units per acre may preclude the type of multi-family development that is typically supported by the current Olympia real estate market. This could result in new development deciding not to include residential uses in a mixed use development and opt for stand-alone commercial development instead. Staff recommends retaining the 25 unit per acre density as a goal, but providing flexibility for a broader range of residential and mixed use development to locate in these neighborhoods.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

The Comprehensive Plan is of strong interest throughout the community.

Options:

1. Recommend that the Planning Commission recommendation on one or both issues be retained in the public hearing draft Comprehensive Plan.
2. Recommend the city manager recommendation be included on one or both issues in the public hearing draft of the Comprehensive Plan.
3. Draft a different recommendation for one or both issues to be included in the public hearing draft of the Comprehensive Plan.

Financial Impact:

NA