



City Council

Provision of Alleys

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Title

Provision of Alleys

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Reviewed by Land Use & Environment Committee in April 2014, prior to Council's Public Hearing on the Comprehensive Plan. See "Options" section below.

City Manager Recommendation:

Discuss and provide guidance on language to include in the draft Comprehensive Plan related to alleys.

Report

Issue:

On August 12, Council referred Comprehensive Plan policies related to alleys to a Study Session.

Primary issues:

- 1) Should alleys be encouraged or required?
- 2) If required, how should criteria be determined for situations in which alleys are required?

Staff Contact:

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Presenter(s):

Sophie Stimson, Senior Planner, Public Works Transportation

Background and Analysis:

Current Comprehensive Plan policy on alleys states that alleys are encouraged in residential and commercial development.

In May 2013, the Olympia Planning Commission recommended Comprehensive Plan policy language that requires alleys in new development instead of encouraging them.

In April 2014, the Land Use and Environment Committee (LUEC) recommended policy language that requires alleys. LUEC added an additional policy relating to the feasibility and practicality of alleys (PT3.6), which was reflected in the City Council's June 2014 Public Hearing Draft of the

Comprehensive Plan.

Alleys contribute to more access and mobility in our transportation system. They also improve urban form by minimizing the need for driveways at the front of a lot.

More alleys would be difficult for the City to maintain. Funding is not in place to maintain the alleys we already have. More alleys will result in more impervious surfaces, which will result in increased stormwater runoff that must be managed (treated, conveyed and detained). For these reasons, staff recommends Comprehensive Plan policy language that encourages alleys, and does not require them.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

Public testimony gathered throughout the *Imagine Olympia* process did not address whether alleys should be required or encouraged. Several comments suggested alleys in the downtown be used for placemaking, and for attractive bicycle and pedestrian paths with lighting, art, and landscaping.

Public comments received this summer on the City Council's Public Hearing Draft of the Comprehensive Plan included:

- Policy language should encourage but not require alleys.
- If requiring alleys, then revise policy PT3.6 related to feasibility and practicality of alleys.

Options:

1. City Manager's April 2014 recommended policy language that encourages alleys. This is also consistent with a public comment on the City Council Public Hearing Draft:
 - *PT3.4 Encourage alleys and retain alleys as public right-of-way.*
 - *PT3.5 Encourage alleys behind lots fronting on arterials and collectors, so that houses or businesses can face the street, sidewalks are continuous, and vehicles can access properties from behind.*
2. LUEC's April 2014 recommended policy language that would require alleys where practical and feasible, and includes an additional policy PT3.6 about needing criteria to define practical and feasible. This is the language that was included in the City Council's Public Hearing Draft:
 - *PT3.4 Require alleys where feasible and practical and retain alleys as public right-of-way.*
 - *PT3.5 Require alleys where feasible and practical behind lots fronting on arterials and collectors, so that houses or businesses can face the street, sidewalks are continuous, and vehicles can access properties from behind.*
 - *PT3.6 The "practicality" and "feasibility" of alleys will be documented using demonstrable and clear criteria so that citizens, developers, and staff have a common understanding that will reduce uncertainty in development and other processes.*

3. New policy language based on a public comment on the City Council Public Hearing Draft:
- *PT3.4 Require alleys where feasible and practical and retain alleys as public right-of-way.*
 - *PT3.5 Require alleys where feasible and practical behind lots fronting on arterials and collectors, so that houses or businesses can face the street, sidewalks are continuous, and vehicles can access properties from behind.*
 - *PT3.6 Establish objective criteria in City standards to determine the practicality and feasibility of alley construction for new development. These criteria should include, but not be limited to, consideration of site topography, surrounding development, environmental constraints, current or future potential alley connectivity, and stormwater management.*

Financial Impact:

There is currently no City budget for alley maintenance. Maintenance is done on an as needed basis.