



City Council

Urban Corridors Issues

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Title

Urban Corridors Issues

Recommended Action

City Manager Recommendation:

Discuss issues and provide guidance on alternatives to bring forward for consideration at Oct. 21 City Council meeting.

Report

Issue:

At its August 12 meeting, the Council discussed public comment received on the Public Hearing Draft of the Comprehensive Plan. Council referred comments regarding urban corridors for discussion at this work session. General comments expressed support for or opposition to the urban corridors concept. Specific comments addressed three issues: 1) building heights allowed in the State/4th corridor in the area east of Plum Street; 2) development density allowed in the three portions of urban corridors designated as "High-Density Neighborhoods"; and 3) the land use designation of four properties in the 2400 block of State Avenue. Each of these three issues is addressed in more detail in an attachment to this staff report.

Staff Contact:

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Presenter(s):

Leonard Bauer, Deputy Director, Community Planning & Development

Background and Analysis:

As it developed its Public Hearing Draft Comprehensive Plan, the Council held a work session on April 8, 2014, devoted to the issue of Urban Corridors. Significant background information on urban corridors is available in the staff report prepared for that work session.

Urban Corridors are an integrated transportation and land use concept initially designated in 1994 by Olympia, Lacey, Tumwater and Thurston County. Urban Corridors are key to the region's strategy to avoid sprawl and reduce its dependence on the auto by providing an appealing housing alternative for people who want to live in an attractive, walkable, urban environment close to transit, work, services and shopping.

The Draft Comprehensive Plan addresses the transportation functions of urban corridors in the Transportation Chapter, particularly Goal GT14 and its associated policies. These are major arterials which serve as the key corridors of a regional multimodal transportation system, including high-quality transit service.

The Draft Plan addresses future land uses along these corridors primarily in the Land Use and Urban Design Chapter, Goal GL13 and associated policies. Also, near the end of the chapter are descriptions of land use designations that support, and are supported by, these key regional, multimodal transportation corridors:

- An “urban corridor” land use designation is applied to areas along many of these corridors to provide for mixed residential and commercial uses that provide places where residents can easily access shops, services and work places by walking, biking, or riding transit, as well as by automobile.
- Three key areas (Downtown, Capital Mall area, and Martin Way/Pacific Avenue area) are designated with a “high-density neighborhood” overlay, with the intent of focusing higher-intensity mixes of commercial and residential growth in these areas.
- The South Capitol Neighborhood is a designated historic district, and its land use designation is low-density residential to reflect the goal of accommodating some residential infill development while sustaining its historic character.

To better clarify that the Draft Plan retains the multi-modal transportation goals for all urban corridors, even when land use designations along the corridors may vary, staff recommends the wording changes to Goal GT14 and its policies included in Attachment 1.

The other three issues addressed in specific public comments are discussed in the remaining attachments to this staff report. They are:

- building heights allowed in the State/4th corridor in the area east of Plum Street;
- development density allowed in the three portions of urban corridors designated as “High-Density Neighborhoods”;
- the land use designation of four properties in the 2400 block of State Avenue.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

Public comments were received from ten individuals that referenced urban corridors. Several commenters focused on the area along State and 4th Avenues east of Plum Street.

Options:

Options for specific issues are included in attachments to this staff report.

Financial Impact:

None; this work item is an element of the Comprehensive Plan Update.