



Land Use & Environment Committee

Downtown Strategy Scoping

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Title

Downtown Strategy Scoping

Recommended Action

City Manager Recommendation:

Receive briefing from staff; provide guidance on the proposed framework and priority topics (**attachment 1**), and preferred approach to SEPA (**attachment 2**).

Report

Issue:

Scoping discussion about the Downtown Strategy. Staff will provide an overview of the proposed framework and priority topics for the strategy, including specific work items proposed to be completed during the planning stage.

Staff Contact:

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Presenter(s):

Amy Buckler, Senior Planner, Community Planning and Development (CP&D)
Leonard Bauer, Deputy Director, CP&D
Brian Wilson, Downtown Liaison, CP&D

Background and Analysis:

The Comprehensive Plan directs the City to have a 'plan for downtown', and this Downtown Strategy is of considerable interest to the community. Scoping for the downtown strategy is set to occur through May of 2015 (**attachment 7**), including:

- The Land Use & Environment Committee (LUEC) to develop a recommended scope at their meetings in January and February;
- Presentation of the LUEC recommendation to Council for direction in March;
- An open house and opportunity for public to provide comment in April;
- Council approval of scope in May;
- City's request for proposals (RFP) for a consultant team to assist with the planning stage (June 2015-16).

At its December 11 meeting, the Land Use & Environment Committee (LUEC) received a staff briefing about downtown planning history and some associated myths, listened to the public and provided feedback on principles to shape the scoping process (**attachment 7**). The committee also recommended that excerpts from the old Comprehensive Plan known as the “Downtown Plan” be referred to as necessary during development of the Downtown Strategy, but not re-adopted at this time.

At its retreat on January 8, 2015, the City Council discussed what the downtown strategy is (**attachment 6**), reviewed examples of the types of illustrations typically found in a downtown strategy (**attachment 5**) and expressed a preference for the following purpose and fundamental concept for the 2015-2020 Downtown Strategy:

- **The purpose:** A Downtown Strategy will help foster a rich diversity of downtown places and spaces that will attract and support the people who live, work and play in downtown Olympia, including 5,000 new residents.
- **Fundamental concept:** Connecting & enhancing downtown places and spaces, by:
 - reducing uncertainty related to development,
 - encouraging private investment,
 - enhancing the public realm, and
 - continuing to ensure the environment and historic resources are protected and reinforced by future development.

A map of public investments and some major private investment projects since 1994 is included in **attachment 4**. The fundamental purpose of the Downtown Strategy is *Connecting Places & Spaces*. To create a more vibrant and attractive downtown, we will leverage our previous investments to connect these places and spaces through private investment and improvements to public streets, sidewalks and other public spaces.

TONIGHT’S MEETING

This evening staff requests guidance from the Land Use Committee on the following two matters, in addition to defining issues for continued LUEC discussion in February:

1. Feedback on proposed framework & priority topics

Attachment 1 outlines a proposed framework and priority topics for the Downtown Strategy. This proposal is based on previous public input from various efforts, including *Imagine Olympia*. It includes specific work items proposed to be completed immediately during strategy development in 2015-16. Work items proposed for completion during strategy development are proposed because they:

- Are within the City’s purview,
- Directly implement the Comprehensive Plan,
- Are needed to provide a foundation on which to move forward,
- Require assistance from the consultant team, and
- Create potential to engage the public in interactive, visual ways.

The Comprehensive Plan adopted in December of 2014 includes this policy:

PL17.1: Adopt a Downtown Plan addressing - at minimum - housing, public spaces, parking management, rehabilitation and redevelopment, architecture and cultural resources, building skyline and views, and relationships to the Port peninsula and Capitol Campus.

Each of these topics will be addressed by the Downtown Strategy, either during strategy development or through initiatives identified for completion in 2016-2020. For example, staff will recommend an update to the City's parking strategy be completed in 2016, using information gathered during the planning stage. Also during the planning stage, staff will stay connected to the Capitol Campus Master and Port of Olympia Real Estate Development Plan processes and promote the relationship to our Downtown Strategy.

2. Preferred approach to SEPA

See **attachment 2** for options related to the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). The City's preferred approach will affect the scope of consultant and staff work during the planning stage. Staff will review the options and further discuss pros and cons with the committee at the meeting.

Options:

Receive briefing from staff; provide guidance on:

1) A framework and priority topics for the downtown strategy

*Staff recommendation is outlined in **attachment 1***

2) The preferred approach to SEPA

*Options are outlined in **attachment 2***

Staff recommended option is to establish an infill exemption area

3) Issues for continued discussion by LUEC in February

If after tonight's discussion, LUEC anticipates we are ready to move forward in developing the proposed scope, staff will present the following in February:

A proposed communication and public involvement plan for the planning stage, including roles for City Council, the Land Use & Environment Committee, City Advisory Boards and Commissions, staff, and other stakeholders

Financial Impact:

\$250,000 of 2014 year end savings is anticipated for this effort.