



Land Use & Environment Committee

Scope and Public Participation Recommendation for the Downtown Strategy

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Title

Scope and Public Participation Recommendation for the Downtown Strategy

Recommendation

City Manager Recommendation:

Provide guidance on the proposed public participation and communication plan, and the overall scope of the Downtown Strategy. Forward a recommended scope to the City Council.

Report

Issue:

Scoping discussion about the Downtown Strategy. Staff will provide an overview of the proposed public participation and communication plan, and review the previously discussed framework, including specific work items proposed to be completed during strategy development.

Staff Contact:

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Presenter(s):

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Keith Stahley, Director, CP&D

Background and Analysis:

The Comprehensive Plan directs the City to have a 'plan for downtown.' Now referred to as the 'Downtown Strategy,' this effort is of considerable interest to the community. Scoping for the downtown strategy is set to occur through May of 2015 (**attachment 8**).

At its December 11, 2014, 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 8**). 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 9**) 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.

At its January 29 meeting, the Land Use & Environment Committee (LUEC) received a briefing from staff on a proposed strategy framework and priority topics, including work items for focus during strategy development in 2015-2016 and SEPA options (**attachment 5**). The Committee requested some small changes and directed staff to move forward with the proposal, and to return with a proposed public participation and communication plan (**attachment 1**) that identifies proposed tools and level of participation (**attachment 2**), and defines the relationship of the Downtown Strategy to other planning efforts (**attachment 3**).

Attachment 4 outlines this 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.

TONIGHT'S MEETING

This evening staff requests guidance from the Land Use Committee on the following three matters:

1. Feedback on the proposed public participation and communication plan

Staff will provide a briefing on the proposed public participation and communication plan (**attachment 1**), proposed tools and level of participation (**attachment 2**) and relationship to other planning efforts (**attachment 3**).

The proposal outlines roles and tasks for the City Council, Planning Commission, other advisory boards, staff, consultant team, a stakeholder group and public. Regarding the Planning Commission and stakeholder group, there are several objectives to be balanced:

- In terms of their roles as 'keepers of the Comprehensive Plan' and liaisons between the City and public, it is important for Planning Commission to have a key role in this process;
- Councilmembers have indicated support for the Planning Commission as the final recommending body, rather than a separate, ad hoc committee;
- Staff and the community would also benefit from involvement of other downtown stakeholders (i.e., representatives from PBIA, ODA) to provide advice and expertise toward strategy development.
- In conferring with other cities, it is clear advisory groups are more effective when kept to a maximum of 12-15 people.

In seeking to balance these objectives, staff has outlined potential roles and tasks for the Commission and a stakeholder group. Staff recommends these **tasks** be considered preliminary until chartered with input from the Commission and stakeholder representatives, as well as the consultant team. However, staff requests the Council provide clear guidance on the **roles** for each group, to guide the charters.

2. Request any changes to the scope (including items discussed tonight and at the Land Use meeting in January.)

See attachments. Staff can provide further information or clarifications.

3. Forward a recommended scope for the Downtown Strategy to the City Council

The scoping timeline calls for the Land Use Committee to finalize their recommendation to City Council this evening. Staff can then assist LUEC in presenting the recommended scope to the City Council in March, and host an Open House, with opportunity for the public to comment, in April. The timeline anticipates the City Council will adopt a final scope in May. Soon after a scope is adopted, staff plans to release an RFP/Q to hire an urban design firm, including other

consultants this firm may need to contract with in order to achieve the scope (“a consultant team”.) The Committee’s work plan holds a spot for review of the RFP/Q criteria in May.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

The attached proposal is based on previous public comment from various engagement efforts, including *Imagine Olympia*.

Over the past two months, staff has discussed ideas and concerns about the Downtown Strategy with various community members, in which the following issues were raised:

- Communication about and strategy itself should be clear that new development should enhance, and not erode, downtown’s natural environment
- Express what the connection is to the Sustainable Thurston Plan
- Hire an expert urban design consultant team with experience in other cities
- Need:
 - An inclusive, democratically-oriented public process to help shape the strategy
 - The Planning Commission’s role to be defined
 - Strong involvement of downtown stakeholders
- Do not allow a single interest group to take over the process

Options:

Receive a briefing from staff; and

1. Provide feedback on the proposed public participation and communication plan
2. Request any changes to the scope (including items discussed tonight and in at the Land Use meeting in January.)
3. Forward a recommended scope for the Downtown Strategy to the City Council

Financial Impact:

Scoping is included in base budget; \$250,000 of 2014 year end savings is anticipated for this process in 2015.