



## Planning Commission

### Commercial Design Review Expansion - Pre-hearing Briefing

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#### **Title**

Commercial Design Review Expansion - Pre-hearing Briefing

#### **Recommended Action**

Briefing only, no action required. The Commission may provide City staff with direction or ask questions in preparation for future public hearing on topic.

#### **Report**

##### **Issue:**

In December the City adopted a major update of its Comprehensive Plan. Among the many changes, was a revision of the policy describing the scope of 'design review' (the City's process for ensuring appropriate architecture and complementary landscaping). City staff will soon be proposing a development code amendment to implement this revised policy. This code amendment will be joined with a miscellaneous set of clarifications of the design review process. This briefing is in preparation for the Commission's May 18 public hearing regarding this code amendment. (File 13-0114)

#### **Staff Contact:**

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#### **Presenter:**

Todd Stamm, Principal Planner

#### **Background and Analysis:**

In 1988 Olympia adopted new regulations requiring that certain development projects conform with 'design' requirements. These architectural and landscaping requirements were initially focused on establishing minimum standards for the exteriors of commercial buildings downtown and along 'exit and entrance' corridors. Over the years these design regulations have been expanded to encompass more areas of the City and more types of projects.

Olympia's Comprehensive Plan policy regarding this topic formerly read:

Land Use and Urban Design Policy 8.1 -- Establish design standards for the following projects and establish an administrative review procedure for projects identified in b.,

- c., d., e., f., and g:
- a. Commercial and multifamily projects within "design districts" identified in Chapter 18.70 of the Olympia Zoning Ordinance.
  - b. Multifamily development outside of "design districts", including duplexes and triplexes, and single family residential structures at densities above six units per acre;
  - c. Detached accessory housing units;
  - d. Residential and commercial structures adjoining or directly across the street from a structure on the national or Olympia historic registers;
  - e. Development in designated historic districts (e.g., South Capital);
  - f. Commercial development abutting a residential district outside of the "design districts";
  - g. Neighborhood centers;
  - h. Certain projects along state highways (see Chapter 18.70 of the Olympia Zoning Ordinance); and
  - i. Other projects listed in Chapter 18.70 of the Olympia Zoning Ordinance.

In December of 2014, as part of a major update to the Plan, a new more concise policy was adopted:

Land Use and Urban Design Policy 6.1 -- Establish a design review process for:

- Commercial and mixed use development adjacent to freeways and public streets
- Other highly-visible, non-residential development, such as the Port of Olympia, campus developments, and master planned developments
- Multifamily residential development and manufactured housing parks
- Detached homes on smaller lots (less than 5,000 square feet) and in older neighborhoods (pre-1940)
- Properties listed on a Historic Register or located within a designated historic district

In substance, this new policy reflected the former one in nearly all respects, except the 'establish design standards along state highways' provision was revised to 'commercial and mixed use development adjacent to freeways and public streets.' These few words reflect the results of a specific policy discussion during the update of the Plan and have led to consideration of a code amendment to expand the design review process to include more public streets. See the attached excerpt from the Comprehensive Plan Update Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for a brief analysis of a more expansive change, and the more limited version that was adopted. (Note that this policy change is just one of many that suggest that the development code should be revised to better implement that Plan. Others are being prioritized as part of an implementing 'Action Plan' now being prepared by the City.)

Since December, the City staff has been exploring options for such an expansion of design requirements. This exploration has included a review of the history of the scope of design review in Olympia. Notice of consideration of this issue was mailed directly to owners of potentially affected properties (commercially zoned land along public streets where design review is not now required); and a handful of these have commented. In addition, staff has met with interested parties including the Design Review Board.

### Proposed Amendment

In summary, the City staff now proposes that a code amendment be adopted requiring that - where not otherwise subject to design review:

Any new or substantial change in a building including or designed to accommodate commercial uses that is adjacent to a public street would be subject to the City's "basic commercial" design criteria (see attached); and that review would be 'administrative,' i.e., would ordinarily be conducted by City staff and would not include review by the Design Review Board.

Further, the staff proposes that Evergreen Park Planned Unit Development would continue to be exempt from City design review.

Specific text of the staff's proposal is not yet complete, but will be available at the Commission's meeting on May 4. A Planning Commission-hosted public hearing regarding the code amendment proposed by City staff is scheduled for May 18. Notice of the hearing will be published in the Olympian and mailed to potentially interested parties including all Recognized Neighborhood Associations. Specific recommendations of the Design Review Board and others will be presented at the public hearing. Following close of the hearing the Commission may make a recommendation to the City Council regarding this proposal or alternatives.

In combination with this substantive amendment, the staff will also be proposing a set of clarifications of the code governing Olympia's design review process. Most are the result of 'loose ends' created when the design code was reformatted and updated in 2004. For example, because the code suggests that residential buildings downtown must conform to conflicting 'downtown' and 'multi-family' design requirements, the amendment would clarify which requirements are applicable.

**Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):**

As described above, many members of the public have expressed an interest in this topic.

**Options:**

No action required. The Commission may provide directions to staff regarding notice of the upcoming hearing or questions to research in advance of the hearing, or both. The Commission could also choose to postpone the hearing scheduled for May 18.

**Financial Impact:**

None, included in base budget and annual work plan.