



Planning Commission

Neighborhood Centers - Review of Draft Public Outreach Plan

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Title

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Report

Issue:

The Commission's neighborhood center work group will present a PowerPoint created for the Commission's public outreach about Olympia's neighborhood centers, and review a draft public participation plan to implement Phase 2 of OPC's Neighborhood Center Project.

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Presenters:

Carole Richmond, Commission Chair
Jerry Parker, Commission member
Missy Watts, Commission member
Bob Bengford, consultant, MAKERS architecture and urban design
Amy Buckler, Senior Planner

Background and Analysis:

Neighborhood Centers are small walk and transit-friendly business clusters within residential neighborhoods that serve the day-to-day retail and service needs of local residents and foster community interaction. These are important to community-wide goals to increase walkability, reduce our carbon footprint, improve human health, and foster neighborhood connections and resiliency.

The City has had a policy of encouraging neighborhood centers for over 20 years, but with some exception these have not developed as described in the Comprehensive Plan. The Plan identifies 17 sites for neighborhood scale retail and mixed uses. A recent policy update would also allow for medium density residential uses in or around centers. Most of the 17 sites are located where the primary surrounding land use is single-family residential. The conditions of these sites vary from thriving mixed use center to vacant.

To implement the Plan, the Olympia Planning Commission (OPC) and staff are working to inform

public dialogue and identify appropriate revisions of Olympia's 'neighborhood center' and 'neighborhood retail' development codes. This is Phase 2 of the Planning Commission's work.

- **In Phase 1 (2014 Info Gathering)**, the Commission gathered input about the public's desires as well as barriers to neighborhood center development. With help from staff, they launched an online questionnaire on OlySpeaks.org and received 668 responses. Staff also interviewed 13 business owners and 8 property owner/developers who have operated a business, designed or developed a neighborhood center in Olympia.
- **In Phase 2 - (2015 Outreach)**, with help from MAKERS architecture consultant Bob Bengford and staff, select members of the Planning Commission will guide the creation of a visual presentation that describes what was learned in 2014, including challenges, opportunities, and illustrations of what different types of centers might look like, etc.

At their June 1 meeting, the Planning Commission selected the following four Commissioners to work more closely on this project: Missy Watts, Carole Richmond, Jerry Parker, and Max Brown. These Commissioners work with Mr. Bengford and staff to build the presentation over the summer. In September, assisted by Mr. Bengford, these Commissioners will provide an overview of the final presentation to the full Commission. That task was intended to complete the City's consulting contract with MAKERS; however, there is still money left in the contract for some additional graphics should the Commission request it.

In fall of 2015 (thru spring of 2016), the Planning Commissioners will lead and facilitate meetings with neighborhoods (and other community groups if they so choose.) The goal is to inform public dialogue and gain a better understanding of the public will and neighborhood preferences before specific code changes are presented. The expectation is that the Commission is leading and facilitating this conversation, with limited logistical support from staff.

- **Phase 3 - (2016 Consideration of Code Changes)** - *Dependent on OPC and Council selecting this item for the OPC Work Plan*

NOT included in the scope of this work:

- Comprehensive Plan policy
- Visioning or master planning for specific neighborhood centers
- Regulations that apply to neighborhood centers areas that are located within master planned Urban Villages (Briggs) or Neighborhood Villages (Mill Pond, Woodbury Crossing, Bentrige.) These villages all have approved master plans.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Public Outreach Plan
2. Draft PowerPoint slides with talking points
3. Previous Public Comments

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

See **attachment 3**

Options:

Hear the presentation by OPC's neighborhood center work group, and provide feedback on the public outreach plan (**attachment 1**) and the PowerPoint slides with talking points (**attachment 2**).

Specific questions for OPC tonight:

- The last slide in the PowerPoint is intended to pose questions to spark dialogue with groups following the presentation. What key questions would OPC like to pose here?
- Does the Planning Commission want to target 2-3 key groups between October 2015 and April 2016, or cast a wider net by making yourselves available for a range of speaking opportunities?

Some Options: *(See attachment 1 for more information)*

1) OPC could identify and seek to coordinate with 2-3 key groups who are willing to host a presentation. If the group(s) is accustomed to hosting in a larger public setting, there is an opportunity to invite other types of stakeholders to attend.

2) Alternatively, or in addition to above, the Commission could reach out to various groups, some of which might typically meet in smaller settings. This type of setting is more likely to require a truncated presentation.

3) The Commission could choose a different approach

Financial Impact:

Up to \$15,000 has been allocated for consultant and graphic work.