



Planning Commission

Commercial Design Review Expansion - Continued Deliberation and Possible Recommendation

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Title

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Staff Recommended Action

Move to recommend approval of code amendment as proposed by City staff.

Report

Issue:

In December of 2014 the City of Olympia 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 that regulates the architecture and complementary landscaping of developments. In response, City staff initiated consideration of a development code amendment that would require that all commercial buildings and substantial commercial remodels adjacent to most public streets meet the City's "Basic Commercial Design Criteria." The staff's proposal also includes amendments to clarify design review procedures. The Commission is to make a recommendation to the City Council regarding this proposal.

Presenter:

None; discussion to be facilitated by Commission chair.

Background and Analysis:

This agenda item is part of the Commission's continuing deliberation leading toward a recommendation to the City Council. The Commission received a pre-hearing briefing on this proposed development code amendment on May 4, 2015, hosted a public hearing on this proposal on May 18 and accepted written comments until May 22. The Commission opened discussion of this proposal on June 1, 2015. Detailed information regarding this proposed code amendment and comments received are included in staff reports of the May 18 and June 1 meetings. Deliberation continued at the July 6, July 20 and August 17, 2015 meetings. On September 21, 2015, the Commission received a briefing regarding the design review process in general. Interested parties are encouraged to review staff reports and other materials associated with those agenda items.

The City's development code currently requires that most commercial development in Olympia comply with at least the City's "basic commercial" design criteria. Commercial projects in many

locations, such as downtown and in 'design review corridors' are subject to additional requirements. However, in some locations commercial projects are exempt from design review. The proposed amendment would require that, at minimum, any commercial development adjacent to a public street meet the basic commercial criteria. In these added areas, projects would be reviewed by City staff and not by the Design Review Board. (The Board reviews larger projects in some parts of the City.)

The City's design review map already identifies "design districts" plus a few major streets where design review is required, such as Harrison Avenue, Cooper Point Road, Black Lake Boulevard south of Highway 101. An illustrative map of the locations that might be added by the proposed amendment, the 'basic commercial' design criteria that would be applicable, and the specific proposed code amendment are all attached for Commission members' convenience.

To date the Commission's discussion has focused on responding to public comments by better understanding existing design review regulations of the City and the possibility of narrowing the scope of the proposed amendment. For example, instead of expanding commercial design review to 'all public streets' the Commission may recommend that a few more major streets be added. These could be either:

(a) those streets designated as "arterials" (such as East Bay Drive, Henderson Boulevard, Yelm Highway, and portions of Division Street), or

(b) only those streets carrying substantial traffic and thus highly visible to the public (such as Fones Road and the southern portion of Lilly Road).

(Complete lists for either approach can be provided on request.)

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

See public comments provided during public hearing phase.

Options:

1. Recommend that City Council adopt the code amendment as proposed
2. Recommend that City Council adopt an alternative amendment (for example, see above 'some streets' option)
3. Recommend that the development code not be amended with regard to this issue

Financial Impact:

The proposed amendment would add to City's cost of providing design review services - however most of cost would be recovered from development application fees. The proposed regulatory change may increase the cost of some developments and have other secondary impacts.