



## Heritage Commission

### Briefing on Downtown Design Guideline Update

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#### **Title**

Briefing on Downtown Design Guideline Update

#### **Recommended Action**

Briefing only

#### **Report**

##### **Issue:**

Briefing regarding the preliminary scope and timeline for updating Downtown design guidelines

##### **Staff Contact:**

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##### **Presenter(s):**

Amy Buckler, Senior Planner

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

The public process to form Olympia's Downtown Strategy is drawing to a close. The Planning Commission is expected to complete their recommendation to the City Council on the draft by the end of this month. The draft is available online (**see attachment 5.**)

One of the first recommended actions to implement the Downtown Strategy (DTS) is an update to the Downtown design guidelines. The guidelines influence site design, building orientation, massing, architecture and other building details, as well as view protection and historic preservation. The guidelines will be influenced by goals in the Comprehensive Plan and priorities identified in the Downtown Strategy (**attachment 1**).

The city has retained MAKERS consultants to assist in this effort. Over an eight-month period, the consultant will prepare updated guidelines with help from a technical work group and with input from staff, public and advisory boards.

#### Proposed Timeline

The proposed timeline for the design guideline update is **attachment 2** and includes the following steps in 2017:

- Direction from the Land Use & Environment Committee (March 16)
- Convene a technical work group
- Two public events (Open House tentatively scheduled for April 12; Fall)
- Briefings for the Design Review Board and the Heritage Commission
- Planning Commission briefings, public hearing and recommendation
- City Council adoption

#### Proposed Technical Work Group

The proposal is for the update to be guided by a technical work group. A draft charter for this group is **attachment 3**. The planning team will seek 1-2 members of the Heritage Commission to serve on this work group.

#### Preliminary Scope of Work

As part of the Downtown Strategy, the City asked MAKERS to prepare an analysis of existing guidelines and preliminary recommendations for the update (**attachment 4**). The analysis concluded that while the City's current Downtown design guidelines are fairly good, some changes are recommended for consistency with the Downtown Strategy and to help improve outcomes. In summary:

- Organize Downtown guidelines into one section so that applicants can access all relevant guidelines in one place
- Make sure guidelines are focused and clear; not onerous. They should be flexible enough to allow for departures when this would result in something that better meets the intent.
- Avoid vague language. Discuss and update the existing use and definitions of "shall" and "should" to help better meet objectives
- Reinforce unique character areas. While basic standards should apply throughout Downtown, some variation should be applied.
- Craft new mixed use guidelines
- Improve historic guidelines, incorporating Secretary of the Interior standards that apply to alterations of existing historic structures
- Update requirements for nonresidential storefronts, considering essential locations where these should be required and design to promote active streetscapes
- Incorporate more Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) measures
- Consider doing away with, or simplifying, ratios as these are difficult to apply on smaller sites (as currently in Pedestrian Street Overlay)
- Update view protection guidelines and include moderate measures to protect and enhance views recommended in the Downtown Strategy.

- Various updates to address site planning and design, pedestrian access, amenities, open space, and building design
- Illustrate with photos, sketches, and diagrams, showing a variety of ways to meet the standards. Where used as good examples, make sure they are exemplary development examples consistent with the desired character for Downtown. Make sure the graphics are internally consistent.

The scope of this update does **not** include:

- Streetscape design, which will be covered in a subsequent update to the Engineering Development and Design Standards (EDDS)
- Park improvements, which are guided by a separate Parks, Arts & Recreation Plan
- Sign design, which will be included as part of the 2017 sign code update
- Changes to the review *process*, such as to the joint DRB/OHC process; however it may examine whether that is necessary and what it would take resource-wise to make a recommended change.

The Design Review Board reviewed the preliminary analysis and scope on Feb 9, 2017, and the Planning Commission did so on March 6. The Land Use Committee will provide guidance on the proposed timeline and scope at their meeting on March 16.

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

An estimated 3,500 people engaged in formation of the Downtown Strategy through workshops and online, including input about overall urban design preferences for Downtown. The DTS summary is available online (**See attachment 5**).

**Options:**

Briefing only

**Financial Impact:**

Included as part of the \$50,000 budget for updating Downtown design guidelines

**Attachments:**

- 1 - Goals and priorities
- 2 - Proposed timeline
- 3 - Draft charter for technical work group
- 4 - Preliminary analysis & recommendations
- 5 - Link to DTS webpage