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Land Use & Environment Committee

Update on Historic Resources Inventory

Agenda Date: 6/15/2017
Agenda Item Number: 5.A
File Number: 17-0630

Type: information **Version:** 1 **Status:** Filed

Title

Update on Historic Resources Inventory

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Not referred to a committee

City Manager Recommendation:

Receive the update. Information only; no action requested.

Report

Issue:

Whether to discuss Downtown historic property survey which is currently underway.

Staff Contact:

Michelle Sadlier, Historic Preservation Officer, Community Planning & Development, 360.753.8031

Presenter(s):

Michelle Sadlier, City of Olympia Historic Preservation Officer

Background and Analysis:

This year, the City of Olympia received grant funding to hire a consultant to conduct a comprehensive historic property survey of more than 75 blocks in Downtown Olympia. As described in the Request for Proposals (See Attachment), this survey is intended to "provide the City with baseline information needed to make thoughtful decisions on managing change in our historic Downtown."

Intent

While the timing of this survey is intended to support the ongoing work of the Downtown Strategy and its implementation, Olympia has long needed a comprehensive source on the historical significance and character of the buildings in our commercial core. Right now, Olympia has some good records but they are piecemeal and mostly out-of-date.

As a result, we rely heavily on staff time and interpretation. For instance, staff handles each query from the public on a case-by-case basis on these common issues:

- Providing advice to a developer on maintaining a designated building's special character early in the project proposal process;
- Helping a building owner do the research necessary to successfully propose their property for the Olympia Heritage Register; and
- Promoting the use of tax incentives for designated historic properties.

This ad-hoc approach means that we are surely missing out on opportunities to help our community preserve and enhance our city's unique character.

Actions

The goal of this survey is to provide the City with systematic, minimally-subjective information on our Downtown historic environment which, in turn, we will use to develop more proactive approaches to preservation planning. To that end, the consultants will:

- Systematically describe the visual quality ("character-defining features") of each building on all blocks in the survey area, regardless of age;
- Use national standards to evaluate the visual significance of each property that is 45 years old or older; and
- Make recommendations on preservation planning approaches based on the special character of Downtown Olympia.

The final deliverables will include a comprehensive report, individual reports for each building, and GIS data.

Timeline

The consultant team began their research earlier this year and met with the Olympia Heritage Commission at the board's annual retreat in February 2017. The team has submitted a draft report (See Attachment) and continues to work on other project deliverables. City staff and the Heritage Commission have recently reviewed the report and will work with the consultant to edit and enhance the final submissions. A final community presentation will take place at a future meeting of the Heritage Commission, likely in the fall of this year.

Once the survey is complete, the City will use the resulting reports to help inform the implementation of the Downtown Strategy, Action Plan, Sea Level Rise Response Plan, and other future projects relating to the places and spaces that give our historic Main Street community its distinctive character.

This work has also set the stage for future explorations into expanding the boundary of the historic district, creating new districts or adding individual properties to the register.

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Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

There is general community interest in protecting and enhancing Olympia's special historical character.

Financial Impact:

Consultant survey entirely funded by Thurston County and Washington State grants (\$5,000 and \$23,000 respectively). Staff time is included in base budget.

Attachments:

Request for Proposals

Draft Report