



Land Use & Environment Committee

Report on EcoDistricts from The Evergreen State College

Agenda Date: 2/21/2019
Agenda Item Number: 6.A
File Number: 19-0163

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

Title

Report on EcoDistricts from The Evergreen State College

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Not referred to a committee.

City Manager Recommendation:

Receive a report from The Evergreen State College students on the concept of creating an ecodistrict in Downtown Olympia.

Report

Issue:

Whether to hear a report from Evergreen students and faculty on exploring the creation of an ecodistrict south of the library in Downtown Olympia.

Staff Contact:

Keith Stahley, Director Community Planning and Development Department 360.753.8227

Presenter(s):

Karen Gaul, Professor of Environmental Studies/Agriculture, The Evergreen State College
Students from The Evergreen State College

Background and Analysis:

On December 4, 2018, students and faculty of The Evergreen State College gave a presentation to a group of City Staff and Councilmembers on preliminary work related to creation of an ecodistrict on the blocks immediately south of library in an area commonly known as Fertile Grounds. This presentation featured a series of presentations from student groups that explored a variety of subjects related to creation of an ecodistrict on the Fertile Grounds block. The ideas presented were exciting and innovative and needed further development and discussion with the City.

Professor Karen Gaul of The Evergreen State College is guiding this project and will be present with a new group of students to present additional ideas about how the project might move forward. Professor Gaul and the students will be looking for feedback from the Committee and staff about their

ideas.

EcoDistricts is a planning concept related to creating sustainable neighborhoods. According to Portland State University, “An EcoDistrict is a neighborhood or district with a broad commitment to accelerate neighborhood-scale sustainability where members commit to achieving ambitious performance goals, guide district investment and community action, and track their results over time.”

The City of Olympia invested a great deal of time and resources developing its Downtown strategy -- adopted on April 25, 2017. This award-winning plan serves as a guide for the proactive redevelopment, reuse and preservation of downtown, its buildings and neighborhoods. The plan identifies five Character Areas. One of these Character Areas is the SE Neighborhood that encompasses the blocks immediately south of the Olympia Branch of the Timberland Regional Library. The Downtown Strategy should help to provide a framework and guidance for the Ecodistrict effort.

In summary the Downtown Strategy suggests that the SE Neighborhood, “Build on existing assets- proximity to Downtown and State employment, the library, and historic residences-to establish a family-friendly residential neighborhood served by some offices, small-scale retail, cafes, and services. Encourage a range of housing (e.g., historic single-family homes, apartments, condos, and townhomes) and energy- and water-efficient buildings as well as other examples of “green innovations.” This area has gardens, children-oriented parks, and great pedestrian connectivity to the State Capitol Campus and other areas of Downtown.

This area is characterized as an urban residential neighborhood with an organic mix of housing and building types. Significant landscape plantings (in streetscapes, medians, and on private property), traditional tree-lined streets, and green stormwater infrastructure help define a park-like neighborhood character and make use of the elevated topography. While architectural variety is important to the area, design guidelines can help ensure compatibility between old and new structures.”

Engaging with The Evergreen State College around ecodistricts, is a way to strengthen the relationship between the city and college and may lead to even greater collaboration in the future.

Neighborhood/Community Interests:

Ecodistricts could be of interest to all neighborhoods in the City of Olympia.

Options:

1. Receive a report from The Evergreen State College and provide feedback and direction to Professor Gaul and the students.
2. Do not receive a report from The Evergreen State College.

Financial Impact:

None at this time.

Attachments:

Ecodistrict Protocol

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

[Link to Portland Ecodistrict Framework](#)
[Link to the Downtown Strategy](#)