



Planning Commission

Downtown Exempt Parking Area - Public Hearing

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Title

Downtown Exempt Parking Area - Public Hearing

Recommended Action

Move to approve the proposed amendments to the Downtown Exempt Parking Area standards in OMC 18.38.

Report

Issue:

Whether to approve the Downtown Exempt Parking Area amendments for residential development, as proposed.

Staff Contact:

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Presenter(s):

Joyce Phillips, Principal Planner, Community Planning and Development

Background and Analysis:

At its February 17, 2022, meeting, the Land Use and Environment Committee (LUEC) referred to the Planning Commission a potential revision to the Downtown Exempt Parking Area map and requirements. The proposal, if approved, would make the area within the boundary exempt from automobile parking requirements for residential development.

Approximately 2 years ago, Community Planning and Development staff noted that some housing projects that had gone through the presubmission conference stage of review were not proceeding to the application stage. Upon inquiry, it was noted that the parking requirements were one of the reasons some of these projects were not moving forward.

In March 2021, the LUEC discussed potential revisions to the Downtown Exempt Parking Area boundary. The proposal was to keep the outer boundary the same, as shown in Figure 38-2 of Chapter 18.38 of the Olympia Code (see Attachment 1), but to make the entire area exempt from minimum parking requirements for residential development rather than having a portion of the boundary limited to a 10% reduction in residential parking requirements. The fact that the code

currently allows the ability to request parking revisions of up to 40% administratively, and to higher degrees upon approval of the Hearing Examiner, were acknowledged.

The Committee referred the issue to the Planning Commission but asked staff to first compile data to help inform the Commission about parking demands in the area and the impact any changes would potentially have on the Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.

Staff collected and reviewed data, but it does not provide the level of detail that was originally requested by the LUEC.

Staff have been surveying the downtown core sporadically since 2019 and regularly since 2021, but the data does not appear to be relevant to the discussion because:

1. The area surveyed does not encompass most of the new apartments.
2. The surveys do not go far enough back in time to get the baseline data which could help illustrate the impact of the added housing.

Staff contacted and spoke with property managers of five of the newer Downtown apartment developments, who shared that their parking is consistently leased to capacity. This is parking that has been provided, even though it was not required by city codes.

It should be noted that the parking exemption does not apply to new commercial development and that most residential projects do provide off-street parking, even when not required by the City. In those cases, parking is typically provided at 0.7-0.8 spaces per unit. Staff anticipates that most developers will continue to provide parking at a similar amount based on market demand and financing requirements.

Additionally, changes in state law (RCW 36.70A.620) were made related to parking, which were recently adopted by the City. Those changes have specific maximums for certain housing types (market rate, housing for seniors and persons with disabilities, and housing affordable to very low-income or extremely low-income individuals) when located within a quarter mile of a transit stop with certain levels of frequency.

It should be noted that while off-street automobile parking would not be required for new residential development within the Downtown Parking Exempt Area, bicycle parking would still be required at the existing ratios.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

The proposal has been routed to Recognized Neighborhood Associations, adjacent jurisdictions, Tribes, state agencies, and other governmental entities. To date, few comments have been submitted. The comments received so far are included in Attachment 3. Staff anticipates more comments will be submitted prior to the public hearing. All written comments received by 5:00 p.m. on July 18, 2022, will be provided for the Commission's consideration.

Options:

1. Move to approve the amendments, as proposed.
2. Move to approve the amendments, with modifications.
3. Recommend that no changes are made to the Downtown Parking Exempt Area standards.

Financial Impact:

There is no specific fiscal impact of the proposal to the City budget. Resources associated with processing this proposal are covered by the Community Planning and Development Department's base budget.

Attachments:

Draft Code

Existing Figure 38-2

Proposed Figure 38-2

Public Comments