



Planning Commission

Olympia 2045 - Economy Chapter update of the Olympia Comprehensive Plan - Public Hearing

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Title

Olympia 2045 - Economy Chapter update of the Olympia Comprehensive Plan - Public Hearing

Recommended Action

Conduct a public hearing and move to recommendation approval of the updated Economy Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.

Report

Issue:

Whether to conduct a public hearing and recommend approval of an updated Economy Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.

Staff Contact:

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Presenter(s):

Mike Reid, Director of Economic Development

Background and Analysis:

Like communities everywhere, Olympia emerged from the Covid-19 pandemic to an altered economic landscape and a clearer understanding of the barriers individuals and households face when seeking economic security. The City launched Olympia Strong in July of 2022 to better understand how community members hope to see our economy recover, evolve and grow in the years ahead, and how we can work with partners to create pathways that serve a broader cross section of those that call Olympia home.

Over eight months, staff analyzed data and deployed surveys, focus groups, person-on-the-street interviews and a variety of other engagement activities to understand the long-term economic needs and desires of the community. This input then shaped updates to the Economy Chapter of Olympia's Comprehensive Plan along with a set of initiatives to be implemented over a 10-year period.

What Does Economic Development Look Like in Olympia?

Olympia Strong goes beyond what might look like a typical "economic development plan" that focuses on business, taxes and infrastructure. This plan takes a human-centric approach, which is

reflected in the proposed changes to the Economy Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. Many of the proposed new initiatives aim to facilitate pathways to economic opportunity and greater financial security for residents (job training, navigator and mentorship programs, income restricted housing, etc.). There is a focus on pathways for youth and those who face higher barriers (people with disabilities, low-income households, etc.). Such programming would fill identified gaps within existing systems to help more individuals, advance equity, and ultimately over time reduce the burden on social services and create more prosperity within the community.

Olympia Strong and the Economy Chapter are supportive of local business and industry, recognizing the contribution made to providing jobs, services and the tax dollars we rely on to fund city services.

By working with our partners to help strengthen a diverse business ecosystem, we contribute to the variety of economic opportunities available to residents and the long-term sustainability of City finances.

Olympia Strong and the Economy Chapter also recognize the positive economic impact of City investment in projects that make Olympia a desirable destination to work, live and play (the arts, placemaking, youth recreation, etc.) At the same time, we must ensure we are prepared to respond effectively to physical and financial challenges (climate action, emergency preparedness, etc.). Such endeavors subsequently increase Olympia's desirability as visitor destination and place to do business, as well as generate a sense of community pride that strengthens our bonds and resilience.

These dynamic objectives reflect what community and economic development looks like as proposed by Olympia Strong and as reflected in the proposed Economy Chapter.

Economic Initiatives

Based on what we heard and learned over several months, staff created a list of initiatives for the next 10 years. These are organized within four focus areas:

- Education and workforce pathways
- Housing and sense of security
- Business enterprise resources and support
- Community pride, lovability and resiliency

While the City is listed as the lead entity in some cases, more often actions will be led by other partner organizations, such as the Economic Development Council, Enterprise for Equity, PacMtn Workforce Development and the United Way. The City has a variety of roles, including convening, facilitating, communicating, coordinating, making capital investments, providing programmatic funding, enhancing its employment opportunities and growing resources for youth.

Climate Analysis:

While the chapter itself will have no direct effect on greenhouse gas emissions, some proposed actions could advance climate and clean energy goals. For example, the career hub could provide job training opportunities in the clean energy sector; housing retrofit programs could promote long-term energy savings; business recruitment and retention efforts would focus on emerging sectors that align with Olympia values, including the clean energy sector; and initiatives that create unique and welcoming places and spaces in Olympia with ongoing focus in high density neighborhoods will benefit climate mitigation by increasing urban density and reducing urban sprawl, supporting use of

public transit, and increasing walking and biking. Likewise, the plan indicates that developing a climate adaptation and preparedness plan can help build preemptive economic resiliency for all. As implementation occurs, actions will be further assessed for climate gains.

Equity Analysis:

Advancing economic equity was a central focus of this work. Thus, the planning process and resulting strategies aimed to reduce economic barriers and expand opportunities for all community members, ensuring that those who face higher barriers including historic discrimination were proactively engaged in the process so that their needs and ideas would be reflected in the proposals.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

The Olympia Strong plan and the Economy Chapter's proposed updates are the culmination of months of public engagement. Online survey reports are available at the Olympia Strong webpage. Additional written public comments received to date are attached.

Options:

1. Hold a public hearing and move to approve the Economy Chapter Update for the Comprehensive Plan, as proposed.
2. Hold a public hearing and move to approve the Economy Chapter Update for the Comprehensive Plan, with modifications.
3. Hold a public hearing but conduct deliberations and make a recommendation at a later date.

Financial Impact:

The Washington State Department of Commerce is providing a grant for up to \$175,000 to help cover the costs of the City of Olympia's Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update.

Attachments:

Public Hearing Draft
Public Comments
Engage Olympia Economy webpage