



## Land Use & Environment Committee

### Report on the Review of Regulations Pertaining to Drive-Through Restaurants

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**Title**

Report on the Review of Regulations Pertaining to Drive-Through Restaurants

**Recommended Action**

**Committee Recommendation:**

Not referred to a committee.

**City Manager Recommendation:**

Receive the report. Briefing only; No action requested.

**Report**

**Issue:**

Whether to receive a status report and update on the review of Olympia's regulatory approach to restaurant drive-throughs to see if an expansion to additional commercial zoning districts is appropriate.

**Staff Contact:**

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**Presenter(s):**

Michelle Sadlier, Associate Planner

**Background and Analysis:**

Staff has recently begun reviewing the City's regulations on drive-through restaurants. This project is a response to questions from members of the public interested in the potential for new drive-through restaurants in a number of zoning districts where they are currently not permitted.

The goal of this analysis is to determine whether the expansion of this use to additional commercial zoning districts meets the vision and intent of Olympia's Comprehensive Plan, related plans, and supporting regulations. If so, a proposed code amendment may be brought forward to the Planning Commission's and ultimately City Council's consideration.

Defining Restaurants with Drive-Throughs

Restaurants with drive-through facilities are defined in the basic provisions section of Olympia's Unified Development Code (OMC 18.02) within the definition for "Restaurant":

*A **"drive-through" restaurant** is one which has one or more drive-through lanes for ordering and dispensing of food and beverages to patrons remaining in their vehicles, for consumption off the premises.*

They can be stand-alone kiosks or restaurants which provide both sit-down and drive-through options. In Olympia, some examples of drive-through restaurants are Eastside Big Tom, Starbucks, McDonald's, and Eagan's Westside Drive-In.

### Current Conditions

As found on Table 6.01, Permitted and Conditional Uses, in OMC 18.06.040, restaurants with drive-through facilities are allowed in a limited number of Olympia's commercial zoning districts (See Attached Maps). These zones are:

- For Existing Restaurant Drive-Throughs:
  - Downtown Business (Permitted)
  - General Commercial (Permitted)
  - High Density Corridor-3 (Conditional)
  - High Density Corridor-4 (Permitted)
- For New Restaurant Drive-Throughs:
  - General Commercial (Permitted)
  - High Density Corridor-4 (Permitted)

Use standards on drive-throughs in commercial districts are found in OMC 18.06.060 (See Attachment). Note that there are no development or design standards specific to drive-through businesses. They are addressed more generally under OMC 18.06.080 Commercial districts' development standards (General) and district-specific design guidelines (e.g., OMC 18.130 Commercial Design Criteria High Density Corridor).

### Issues to Consider

The drive-through function is, by nature, an auto-oriented service. While offering the benefit of customer convenience, they also have the potential for negative impacts if inappropriately located and/or designed. Some of these concerns may include those related to traffic volume, noise and air pollution, visual impacts of long queues of idling cars, and pedestrian safety and experience.

Many of these issues are specifically addressed in Olympia's Comprehensive Plan (See Attachment). The importance of walkability and the pedestrian experience to our community is at the heart of the Land Use and Urban Design Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. It defines Olympia's vision for the future as "a walkable, vibrant city," and includes a number of goals and policies that respond to this vision. Other chapters of the Comprehensive Plan provide goals and policies that relate to a reduction in pollution and energy use, and the promotion and enhancement of multimodal transportation options.

With the vision, goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan in mind, a number of Olympia's commercial zoning districts support and foster the development of pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods and deemphasize motorized vehicle use. Yet in order to serve the broad needs of our community, not all zoning districts prioritize pedestrian-oriented businesses. This project is assessing whether drive-through restaurants may be compatible with the intended purpose of some of Olympia's commercial zoning districts. If so, possible development criteria will also be considered that would support an effective response to the range of concerns outlined above.

#### Compatibility with Intent of Zoning Districts - Preliminary Review

City staff is currently conducting an analysis of the nature and intent of each of Olympia's existing commercial zoning districts (See Attachment). Based on this review, staff preliminarily finds that drive-through restaurants remain incompatible uses in a number of zones because of their intent to support and foster the pedestrian experience (e.g., Downtown Business District and Neighborhood Retail) or because non-office commercial service uses are not permitted (Commercial Services - High Density District).

Four commercial zones are being further evaluated to determine if restaurants with drive-through service could be considered compatible with their intent:

- Auto Services District (AS)
- Medical Service District (MS)
- Professional Office/Residential Multifamily District (PO/RM)
- High Density Corridor-3 (HDC-3)

If this analysis indicates that restaurant drive-throughs could be appropriate in one, some, or all of these zones, staff will then focus attention on considering whether and which development criteria would be needed in order to address the pedestrian experience and other concerns raised over potential impacts.

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

Community support for actions which support the vision of a walkable, vibrant community.

#### **Attachments:**

Maps  
OMC Selections  
Comprehensive Plan Selections  
Zone Comparison