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**COMMUNITY PLANNING &  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

Joshua Cummings, Director

*Creating Solutions for Our Future*

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Thurston County Planning Commission  
City of Olympia Planning Commission

**FROM:** Leah Davis, Associate Planner  
Maya Teeple, Senior Planner

**DATE:** January 25, 2023

**SUBJECT:** **Docket Item CPA-1, Olympia Joint Plan**

**Planning Commission Requests**

The request of the Planning Commission is to arrive at a recommendation on the Olympia Joint Plan. Each Planning Commission will produce a recommendation on the joint plan.

The Planning Commission held a public hearing and subsequent work session on the Olympia Joint Plan on November 30, 2022 and had the following requests:

- Add goals and policies that address plans to update the plan in the future, including review and adjustment of UGA boundaries, developing subarea plans, and no net loss of farmland.
- Add context for some areas, such as downtown and corridors.

**Summary of Changes**

The following changes are included in the most recent draft of the Joint Plan

***Amended language regarding agriculture in the Urban Growth Area***

Goal 2 in the Natural Environment chapter has the following policy amendments:

GN2 Land is preserved and sustainably managed.

PN2.3 The County and City should work together to identify strategies to mitigate for loss of working farms in the urban growth area.

PN2.4 Explore innovative strategies to conserve agriculture within the urban growth area, such as an agriculture protection overlay or public farmland initiative, like Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), to encourage conservation of agriculture.

PN2.5 Expand the use of Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) and Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs to support compact growth in urbanizing areas while conserving long-term agriculture of commercial significance in rural areas.

PN2.6 The County and City should work together to identify tools and review regulations to better support small agriculture with the urban growth area.

PN2.7 In future updates to the Working Lands Strategic Plan, the County and City shall work together to track acres of agriculture lost due to conversion, so mitigation strategies can be implemented to offset the acres lost.

### *Amended language regarding planning for growth in the Urban Growth Area*

Goal 18 in the Land Use and Urban Design chapter has the following amendments:

~~GL18 Land is preserved and sustainably managed. The Urban Growth Area is appropriately sized and includes land that can be developed to higher intensities.~~

PL18.1 The County and City regularly review official population forecasts to ensure there is enough buildable land to meet future demand and, if needed, adjust the boundaries accordingly.

PL18.2 At appropriate intervals, the County and City assess the ability of the existing Urban Growth Area to be developed to the planned densities, and add or remove areas to meet those goals.

PL18.3 In future Joint Plan updates, consider developing sub-area plans for the northeast, southeast and west areas within the Olympia UGA to provide place-specific planning information and, if applicable, policies.

### *Amended language regarding planning for transportation corridors*

## **Appendix A: Transportation Planning History**

The distinction between urban and rural operating conditions is a critical policy issue. What may be an acceptable level of congestion on urban streets, may exceed design capacity on rural roads. Transportation policy in Urban Growth Areas can be a balancing act. Urban corridors that connect downtown Olympia with Urban Growth Areas feature a wide range of services—from hospitals, to shopping centers, to industrial warehouses—with corresponding traffic volumes and congestion. Development on corridors may impact those residents living in the Urban Growth

Areas, as these are the primary routes taken to access commercial amenities. How these corridors continue to develop in the future may be consequential to people living beyond the city limits.

## **Northeast Transportation Issues**

### **Lilly Road Corridor**

Lilly Road provides an alternate to South Bay Road for residents of the rural county and the Urban Growth Area heading from the north to the city center of Interstate 5.

### **Kaiser Road and Black Lake Boulevard Area Connections**

New street connections are expected as more growth occurs in the area of Black Lake, Kaiser road and US 101. The planned connection from Kaiser Road to Black Lake Boulevard south of US 101 will create a new north-south corridor parallel to Black Lake Boulevard, and will help connect the northwest UGA to US 101 and the west end of Harrison Avenue. Consistent with standards, this new 2-lane major collector will include bike lanes, sidewalks, planter strips, trees, lighting and a curved design to slow vehicle speeds.

### **Urban corridors**

“Urban corridors” are an integrated land use and transportation concept defined in the 1993 Regional Transportation Plan and reflected in the 2040 Regional Transportation Plan. The urban corridor approach intends to reduce sprawl and dependence on the auto by allowing people to live in attractive urban neighborhoods where they can walk or use transit to get to work and meet their daily needs.

The region and Thurston County have designated the main fully built-out urban arterials and collectors (such as Pacific Avenue, Capitol Way, Martin Way, etc.), as well as other heavily traveled roads that continue throughout urban growth areas into the rural county as “Urban Strategy Corridors” where level of service may exceed adopted standards.

Urban Corridors ~~are the major arterials in our system, that~~ generally correspond with high density land uses. These corridors that help to serve residents in the urban growth areas are Harrison Avenue, Boulevard Road, and the triangle on the Westside shaped by Harrison Avenue and Cooper Point Road and Black Lake Boulevard.

### **Strategy Corridors**

Most “strategy corridors” are ~~the city’s major streets within urban corridors,~~ though some fall outside urban corridor boundaries. As described in the Thurston Regional Transportation Plan, strategy corridors are places where road widening is not a preferred option for solving congestion problems, either because the street is already at the maximum five-lane width, or because adjacent land uses are built out or environmentally sensitive. Such roads include South Bay Road and Rainier Road. In strategy corridors, levels of service may exceed adopted standards, because while congestion may be at unacceptable levels, these are the areas where we want to encourage more density, more jobs and housing.

In strategy corridors, such as Yelm Highway, a different approach is needed for maintaining safety and mobility. If the County ~~City~~ can make travel on foot, by transit and bicycle attractive and convenient, these strategy corridors will increase mobility despite increased traffic. In lieu of road widening, alternatives (e.g., intersection improvements, connections to regional trails, extending/increasing transit service) should be applied to mitigate congestion. Bus corridors will be developed along most of these corridors, where improved transit efficiency can encourage transit use. Traffic signal improvements that prevent buses from getting stuck in traffic, such as extended green time and queue jump lanes, will be an increasingly important focus for the City in these corridors. A map of the ~~City's~~ Strategy Corridors can be found on the Corridors Map found in Appendix H.

### **A Healthy Economy Enhances our Quality of Life**

Olympia enjoys a relatively healthy economy and stable revenue base, making it possible for it to invest in public improvements and services. These include the Washington Center for the Performing Arts, The Olympia Center, Percival Landing, the Farmers Market, new sewer capacity, new roads, and other needed infrastructure. All of this makes Olympia increasingly attractive to private investors, which will further increase our revenue base, and make more community improvements possible. ~~However, the City should not make these sorts of investments without also considering the long term maintenance and operations costs it will also incur.~~

### **Downtown Olympia**

Downtown Olympia is a special place. For many years it has served as Thurston County's only downtown. It has the only urban waterfront in the region, attracting recreational boaters from throughout Puget Sound. It has the only performing arts center, is the region's banking sector and is the recreational hub for the Urban Growth Area and the region.

Downtown Olympia is also home to the state's largest farmers-operated farmers' market. The Olympia Farmers' Market serves as a link to a substantial network of small family-owned farms and businesses, many based in the Urban Growth Area and rural Thurston County. The market serves as a tourist attraction and destination and a place for local residents to purchase local food. Farmers Markets have proven to be a good way to foster the development and expansion of locally owned businesses. In recent years small neighborhood markets are beginning to appear in Olympia with the hope of fostering more neighborhood centers and even more accessibility to locally grown and produced products.

### **Other minor changes**

Making the verbiage less Olympia-centric: p. 82-84

Correction on traffic improvement plan: p. 142

Community Planning proposes the following as the schedule for review of this item:

- January 25, 2023—work session and possible recommendation

### **Draft Motion for consideration**

- Move to recommend adoption of the Olympia Joint Plan, an element of the Thurston County Comprehensive Plan.

**AND**

- Further move to recommend approval of amendments to the Thurston County Code, Chapter 23.05 ‘Residential Districts’ to remove the grocery store requirement from the Community-Oriented Shopping Center zoning district.

**OR**

- Further move to recommend approval of a land use and zoning amendment for parcel 09570038002 from Planned Development to Multi-family Residential with an associated zoning change from Community Oriented Shopping Center to Professional Office/Residential Multi-family.