

TUMWATER PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF HYBRID MEETING
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CONVENE: 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Chair Elizabeth Robbins and Commissioners Nelida Daniel, Terry Kirkpatrick, Gina Kotek, Sandra Nelson, and Brandon Staff.

Excused: Grace Edwards.

Staff: Housing and Land Use Planner Smith-Erickson and Associate Planner Dana Bowers.

CHANGES TO AGENDA: Approval of minutes was deferred to the next meeting.

NEW PLANNING COMMISSIONER INTRODUCTIONS: Newly appointed Commissioners Nelida Daniel and Sandra Nelson introduced themselves and shared information on their respective employment, personal background, and interest in serving on the Planning Commission.

Other Commissioners provided self-introduction.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Deferred to the next meeting.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORTS: There were no reports.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Planner Bowers provided a staff update. Efforts continue on completing the update of the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan represents the community's vision for growth over the next 20 years and incorporates land use, housing, transportation, climate, and other elements. Each element is analyzed to determine how to meet growth needs over the next 20 years. The Growth Management Act (GMA) was adopted by the state in 1990. The Comprehensive Plan follows the GMA and incorporates updates mandated by the Legislature and to meet future growth demands. The Legislature recently passed bills for housing and climate requiring a major update of the Housing Element and creation of a new Climate Element.

Last week, the City sponsored a Transportation Open House in support of the update of the Transportation Plan. Approximately 41 individuals attended the in-person meeting comprised of 17 homeowners and five renters. Many comments supported a shift in emphasis for all transportation modes. Staff is working with Intercity Transit staff to coordinate a co-hosted meeting. Other open houses will feature information on cycling and walking. Additionally, online content is available that was presented during the in-person open house.

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At the Commission's April 8, 2025, meeting, the agenda includes an update of the Food Systems Plan and Land Use Element goals, policies, and implementation actions. At this time, no agenda items are scheduled for the April 22, 2025, meeting.

Planner Smith-Erickson reported the update includes table formats for the different elements that identify goals and policies from the current Comprehensive Plan and whether the goals and policies have been updated, as well as tracking to reflect any goals or objectives that have been removed or accomplished. Previous updates of the Comprehensive Plan did not require tracking or progress reports. However, during this update cycle, the City is required by the state to provide a five-year update.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Michael Barry said he attended the recent transportation open house and is interested in learning more about the update of the Transportation Plan. He is a resident of Tumwater and travels throughout western Washington.

**2050 REGIONAL
TRANSPORTATION PLAN:**

Allison Osterberg, Planning Manager, Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC), provided an update on the 2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

Ms. Osterberg described the mission and purpose of TRPC as an organization that provides visionary leadership on regional plans, policies, and issues for the benefit of all Thurston region residents. TRPC assembles and analyzes data, serves as a regional convener, builds intergovernmental consensus, and conducts planning consistent with state and federal requirements.

The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is the agency's largest plan, which is updated every five years.

Ms. Osterberg introduced TRPC Transportation Manager Katrina Van Every, who is leading the update of the RTP.

The growing population will lead to increased traffic volumes in the Thurston region. Projects in the RTP will help mitigate vehicle congestion associated with growth over the next 25 years. The region's planned land use and roadway capacity improvements alone will not be sufficient to meet regionally adopted targets, goals, or level of service standards. However, as progress occurs on regionally adopted targets and goals, those accomplishments will help reduce level of service failures expected in the future.

The RTP – *What Moves You*, is a regional roadmap for a complete

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and high-functioning transportation system over the next 25 years. The RTP must be consistent with local comprehensive plans and transportation and land use elements.

The RTP covers a 25-year planning horizon for all transportation modes, meets regional goals and policies, and includes recommendations, a financial forecast, and future conditions. Areas of emphasis include:

- Safety
- Equity
- Climate change & greenhouse gas emissions
- Maintaining the existing system
- Projects that:
 - Continue to enhance transit options
 - Emphasize system efficiency
 - Strategically expand the system
 - Plan for local and state roads as a cohesive system

Regional targets and goals include:

- Reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries to zero
- Increase share of households in urban areas and preserve rural areas
- Decrease annual vehicle miles traveled per capita
- Decrease greenhouse gas emissions
- Increase active transportation and transit use

Projected changes in the region by 2050 anticipate an increase in population of 106,000 people, 58,000 new housing units, 52,000 new jobs, and 52,000 more people living near transit.

The RTP incorporates 80 regional projects:

- Adding 18 miles of new roadways
- 36+ miles of new general purpose lanes and center turn lanes
- 65+ miles of new or rebuilt bicycle and pedestrian facilities
- 29+ miles of new multiuse trails
- 3 new or realigned highway interchanges
- Improved transit facilities and expanded service

Tumwater capacity projects within the RTP include:

- Brewery District Transportation Project
- Capitol Boulevard – M Street to Israel Road
- Henderson Boulevard Corridor
- Old Highway 99 Improvements
- Tumwater Boulevard Interchange
- Mottman Road Improvements (Tumwater, Olympia)

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Trail projects:

- Deschutes Valley Trail
- Karen Fraser Woodland Trail Phases 3 and 4

Public Transportation projects

- Expansion of Urban Transit Services
- Innovative Service Zone Study
- Lacey/Olympia/Tumwater/Yelm Intra-County Express Corridor Plan and Implementation Strategy
- Smart Corridors Phase 4

Studies:

- I-5 and 93rd Avenue SE Interchange Improvements Study
- Bicycle Connectivity Strategy (TRPC)
- Public Freight Mobility Strategy (TRPC)
- Regional Transportation Safety Action Plan (TRPC)

A complete draft of the RTP will be released in early April 2025. A public comment period will follow the release of the draft. Following the public review, the Transportation Policy Board will review the RTP and forward a recommendation to the TRPC for review and action in July 2025.

Chair Robbins asked about the inclusion of air, rail, and water travel modes within the RTP. Ms. Osterberg advised that the RTP includes sections for rail, air, and marine travel.

Chair Robbins asked whether the plan addresses the larger region and interconnectiveness to areas outside the region. Ms. Osterberg replied that to some extent, the RTP addresses other areas with a focus on the Thurston region. TRPC coordinates closely with the Washington State Department of Transportation and other Metropolitan Planning Organizations across the state, such as Puget Sound Regional Council and other regions within the state.

Chair Robbins stressed the importance of the RTP promoting and pursuing different avenues to encourage other modes of travel through more thoughtfully planned and executed pathways, thoroughfares, and multi-modal infrastructure within the region. She supports the inclusion of identifying areas of priority for adding sidewalks and other forms of pathways within both the RTP and the City's Transportation Plan. Ms. Osterberg responded that the RTP includes many construction projects and recommendations, as well as within the goals and policies. Following the conclusion of the comprehensive plan planning process by all the jurisdictions, input from the public will help inform priorities. The RTP includes several projects focused on other forms of travel, such as transit

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planning projects and the bicycle connectivity strategy.

Ms. Osterberg addressed questions on the Smart Corridors Phase 4 project, which emphasizes Intercity Transit service. Intercity Transit is testing service along Martin Way and is identifying other location corridors for implementing the Smart Corridor technology.

**2025 COMPREHENSIVE
PLAN PERIODIC UPDATE –
HOUSING:**

Planner Smith-Erickson provided an update on the status of the draft Housing Element and public outreach.

Projected need for housing units for the City including the urban growth area over the next 20 years is more than 9,000 housing units for a total of 50,676 housing units. Housing need is based on average median income (AMI) and the type of housing unit. Development incentives for housing at specific income ranges include property tax exemption and zoning flexibility.

Public engagement began in February 2024 with a survey followed by a stakeholder engagement email in April 2024 and housing stakeholder meetings from April through May. A housing presentation was provided at the Thurston Chamber of Commerce, tabling at the Tumwater Library, and a series of open houses beginning in May 2024. The online open house was available from May through September 2024. Additional public engagement occurred in November 2024. Other engagement included partnerships with various civic organizations and in-person outreach meetings in November through December. An online survey was posted on questions pertaining to a displacement study.

Planner Smith-Erickson reviewed feedback and input received from public outreach on goals and policies:

Goal 1 – Increase the supply and variety of housing for every income and age group.

- Housing is a social issue – especially ongoing maintenance. Add initiatives supporting maintenance policies.
- Include policies that encourage partnerships/education.
- Add disability, protected classes, and veterans to H-1.1.
- Add disability, developers, managers, and renters to H-1.2.
- Plan for and require more density at time of build, such as potential accessory dwelling units.
- Waive impact fees for certain affordability percentages, such as area median income.
- Ensure displacement analysis does not result in unnecessary barriers to housing productions.
- Open opportunities to create communities, not just cookie

cutter homes.

Goal 2 – Expand the supply of permanent, income-restricted affordable housing.

- Obtain land for asset limited homes.
- Expand the City’s multifamily tax exemption program to add options for renewing 12-year exemptions and a new 20-year option.

Goal 3 – Maintain and improve existing housing stock.

- Incentivize non-owner occupied, owner occupied, and condominiums.
- Increased tenant protections have increased liabilities and maintenance/repairs costs for developers and landlords.
- Create financial assistance or initiatives as part of the goals and policies for transiting to electrification.
- Create a hub for information, resources, and rebates for energy score.
- Connect with and help fund programs that do critical repairs so homeowners can stay in place.
- Prioritize septic/well conversions for more housing capacity and density.

Goal 4 – Make it easier for households to access housing and stay housed.

- Identify the specific unique needs for housing in Tumwater, such as families and seniors.
- Create clearer processes for lot splitting and condominium permitting and conversions.
- Identify areas of high priority for affordable housing and have long range planning involved with permitting process. Reduce roadblocks and permit timelines.
- Create processes for land trusts and explore manufactured home park resale restrictions.
- Tumwater should create revolving funds for down payments and programs to help risky rentals or renters with high-risk backgrounds.
- Have counseling and education for people available before they become displaced.

Goal 5 – Continually build on resources and collaboration to improve implementation of housing strategies.

- City should start a local housing stakeholder group or committee that meets at scheduled intervals to continue collaboration and send emails with updates.
- Create a GIS/zoning map – housing database of affordable

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- housing and inventory.
- Share property information and permitting history to enable people to use wetland and other reports previously submitted to lower costs for permitting/review, such as Thurston County records and make earlier submittals public.
- The City should try to waive development regulations for innovative housing projects and demonstration projects.

Goal 6 – Explore a permanent source of funding for low-income housing.

- Waive impact fees for a certain percentage of affordable housing units in a development.
- Expand the multifamily tax exemption program to all zoning designations that allow multifamily housing.
- Tumwater should start its own Home Fund.
- Tumwater should try to buy land to sell to non-profits and affordable housing developers.

Planner Smith-Erickson requested feedback on each goal, whether a goal could inadvertently not represent some in the community under a specific policy or action, and whether there could be unforeseen or unintended consequences or burdens associated with policies and/or actions that should be considered.

Discussion ensued on the difficulty of prioritizing so many goals and actions, whether the goals and policies would be attainable, and whether lower priorities or unattainable goals in the next several years should be considered.

Planner Smith-Erickson noted that many of the actions are dependent upon funding. Options include working with the Regional Housing Council, pursuing advocacy with the State Legislature, applying for grants, condensing and consolidating some of the actions, and continuing working with community organizations. It was noted that the Comprehensive Plan covers a 20-year planning horizon that will be updated in 10 years. The City is also required to meet all state requirements.

Chair Robbins offered that the Commission could assist the City Council by providing assistance in prioritizing goals and actions. Planner Smith-Erickson noted that many of the goals were adopted within the Housing Action Plan approved by the City Council.

Commissioner Kirkpatrick commented on the gap between the plan and execution of the plan. The City's Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) is based on a six-year funding cycle, which is much more

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manageable than a 10- or 20-year plan. However, many projects listed in the CFP are based on the City receiving a grant. Prioritization between the planning level and execution is often based on hopes rather than on evidence of reality, often leading to unrealistic expectations. Many projects are dependent upon other sources of funding rather than from City funds. Prioritization is a good first step, but it is not necessarily an indication that the project will proceed.

Planner Smith-Erickson suggested reorganizing the information by identifying state required goals, policies, and actions, and then reviewing priorities for each goal that are specific to the City.

Chair Robbins offered that the intent is to assess goals and actions that should be implemented sooner rather than later while recognizing the complexity of the funding streams rather than selecting an arbitrary number of goals and actions.

Commissioner Staff offered that the enormity of the information is at the first stage of review, which can be overwhelming but an important exercise to ensure the information is inclusive and important for the City prior to finalizing based on actual funding and available resources. Many of the goals are ambitious; however, it is dependent upon the Commission, staff, and the Council to condense the information for moving forward understanding that the list will be reviewed in 10 years to assess progress.

Commissioner Kirkpatrick complimented staff on the format and readability of the draft plan compared to prior plans.

Commission feedback on the goals included caution in terms of waiving some permitting or development regulations as it could create disruption in the City's ordinances and policies. It is important to consider any negative repercussions when considering waiving a requirement. Planner Smith-Erickson noted that there are creative ways to address housing requirements to increase affordability for developers to produce affordable housing. Demonstration projects are one avenue to create affordable housing.

Commissioner Kirkpatrick conveyed concerns about condominiums located in a small city versus a larger metropolitan area as often people purchase a unit as an investment and eventually, a majority of condominium ownership can be absent landlords that render decisions not benefitting the condominium community. Flooding the community with rental condominiums can be detrimental to the community. Discussion ensued on possible enforcement measures available to the City, such as nuisance ordinances for property not

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maintained.

Planner Smith-Erickson noted that some other jurisdictions require property managers to apply for a city business license. Currently, the City requires a business license for property owners of five or more housing units.

Commissioner Staff mentioned the possibility of creating a rental registry, similar to a municipality in Florida that includes all rentals in the municipality for enforcement and tracking purposes.

Commissioners discussed whether it is possible to create policies that would force developers to create homes for different income levels. Commissioner Kirkpatrick pointed out that the City's current zoning includes options available to developers to provide different housing types that were not available five years ago.

MOTION:

Commissioner Staff moved, seconded by Commissioner Kirkpatrick, to extend the meeting for five minutes to 9:05 p.m. A voice vote approved the motion unanimously.

Planner Smith-Erickson reviewed Goal 3 – Maintain and improve the existing housing stock. She reviewed actions supporting efforts to maintain existing housing stock that is healthy and safe, explore maintenance rehabilitation programs with non-profit providers to help residents stay housed, work with non-profits providers with support services to work with property owners and renters to maintain housing in a good condition., and support federal and state, and local financing opportunities to maintain, upgrade, or retrofit existing housing stock.

Commissioner Kirkpatrick supported prioritizing septic/well conversions, as it would increase housing density with the understanding that the action would be large effort by the City but would result in a higher return on investment.

Planner Smith-Erickson reviewed Goal 4 – Make it easier for households to access housing and stay housed.

Planner Smith-Erickson reviewed Goal 5 – Continually build on resources and collaboration to improve implementation of housing strategies.

Commissioner Kirkpatrick questioned why “H-5.4.2 Work with the Tumwater School District, Thurston County Housing Authority, and other nonprofits to pursue grant funding and implement transitional housing strategies for families with children” discriminates against

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families without children. He suggested revising the language to reflect “all families.”

Planner Smith-Erickson explained that the action was intended to address unhoused students within the school district. The action is based on feedback from the school district. Commissioners supported an action that applies to all families and not just families with children.

MOTION:

Commissioner Nelson moved, seconded by Commissioner Staff, to extend the meeting to 9:10 a.m. A voice vote approved the motion unanimously.

Planner Smith-Erickson reviewed Goal 6 – Explore a permanent source of funding for low-income housing.

Commissioner Kirkpatrick noted a typographical error in the numbering of the second action.

Planner Smith-Erickson encouraged additional comments via email.

NEXT MEETING DATE:

The next meeting is scheduled on April 8, 2025.

ADJOURNMENT:

Commissioner Staff moved, seconded by Commissioner Kirkpatrick, to adjourn the meeting at 9:08 p.m. A voice vote approved the motion unanimously.

Prepared by Valerie L. Gow, Recording Secretary/President
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