

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

**PRESENT:** Chair Elizabeth Robbins and Commissioners Grace Edwards, Terry Kirkpatrick, Meghan Sullivan, Michael Tobias, Anthony Varela, and Kelly Von Holtz.

Excused: Commissioner Brian Schumacher.

Staff: Planning Manager Brad Medrud, and Department Assistant Brittaney McClanahan.

**CHANGES TO THE AGENDA:** There were no changes to the agenda.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES JULY 25, 2023:**

**MOTION:** Commissioner Tobias moved, seconded by Commissioner Varela, to approve the minutes of July 25, 2023 as published. A voice vote approved the motion unanimously.

**COMMISSIONER'S REPORTS:** There were no reports.

**MANAGER'S REPORT:** Manager Medrud reported the next meeting includes a review of the Housing Element of the Comprehensive Plan. Laura Hodgson with the Washington State Department of Commerce will review all new state housing requirements as part of the periodic update of the Tumwater Comprehensive Plan. Included on the agenda is a briefing on the 2023 Comprehensive Plan amendment cycle comprised of the Capital Facilities Plan and Old Highway 99 Transportation Study.

Staff continues research and discussions on the new Washington Wildland-Urban Interface Code and its impact on the City's urban forestry amendments. In late August, staff met with the State Building Code Council to review some of the issues created by the new codes. Another meeting is scheduled with representatives from the Washington Association of Cities (AWC) to review the organization's perspective of the codes. It is likely information will be forwarded to the State Building Code Council in time for its review at its October meeting from either AWC or from the City of Tumwater. Staff continues to

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work on the draft of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided some detailed comments that staff will address prior to completion of the public draft of the HCP.

Chair Robbins asked about the projected timing of resolving issues associated with new Washington Wildland-Urban Interface Code. Manager Medrud advised that the Building Code Council has not changed the planned implementation date of October 2023. The energy code may encounter a delay. Following implementation of the new code, staff anticipates proceeding with the update of urban forestry amendments.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** There were no public comments.

**2025**  
**COMPREHENSIVE**  
**PLAN PERIODIC**  
**UPDATE – LAND USE**  
**ELEMENT:**

Manager Medrud said the review will include a review of the goals, policies, and actions throughout the Comprehensive Plan using the Land Use Element as the initial starting point. The briefing includes an example from the City of SeaTac of its update approach.

Goals within the Comprehensive Plan are statements of desired outcomes or intended achievements. Policies are specific statements that guide actions and provide a framework for future decision-making. Actions are specific implementations of goals and policies.

Common terms throughout the Comprehensive Plan include actions ranging from “shall” to “encourage” or “consider.” Many of the current plan’s policies are passive, which could be considered for conversion to action policies during the Commission’s review process.

Statements of principle are intended to produce clear targets or conditions of success. One example is, “City shall endeavor to process completed development applications within 120 days.” Under the statements of impact, the information describes situations where housing is a priority.

The City of SeaTac’s policies and actions tend to be active and include a strong implementation element.

Under state law, a new requirement is addressing racially disparate impacts as part of the periodic update. Specifically, how it is addressed in goals and policies within the Comprehensive Plan. The new requirement requires analysis to identify active inclusions that result in an unintended intent, such as focusing resources in particular areas rather than in areas that require more resources. Another aspect of the new requirement is the passivity of policies, such as including inadvertent conditions that might result in the exclusion of certain

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populations. One example is the phrase, “neighborhood character.” Additionally, under the Growth Management Act, the Comprehensive Plan must incorporate internal consistency between policies and the goals of all elements.

Manager Medrud encouraged the Commission to review section “Step 3: Evaluate Policies” of the State Department of Commerce’s Racially Disparate Impacts Guidance because it provides a recommended process for assessing goals and policies according to two lenses contributing to policy impacts.

Manager Medrud presented a proposed framework for updating the Land Use Element. Guiding the review and amendment process are RCWs and WACs. RCWs are Revised Code of Washington, a compilation of all permanent laws in force. WACs are the Washington Administrative Code containing regulations and rules adopted by state agencies that interpret the RCWs adopted by the State Legislature. The proposed formant includes columns of *Goal, Policy, and Action, Addresses (RCWs & WACs), Strength (Passive/Active), and Notes.*

Manager Medrud reported the Land Use Element includes the goals, policies, and actions setting forth the direction for the future growth of Tumwater based on its 20-year community vision. The goals, policies, and actions are intended to ensure coordination with other Comprehensive Plan Elements, Sustainable Thurston, and County-Wide Planning Policies. He cited several of the policies, goals, and actions and invited questions or feedback on issues not included in the framework that should be considered as part of the update.

Chair Robbins said she is hopeful the plan is developed with clearer and plain language about why the goals, policies, and goals matter, such as defining particular policies and what the City is attempting to achieve and why an action would accomplish the desired outcome.

Commissioner Tobias inquired as to whether the Land Use Element speaks to emergency and disaster preparedness, such as lands that have been identified for conservation purposes that could suffer a catastrophic loss or wildfire decimating an urban forest that has been preserved. Manager Medrud responded that the Land Use Element establishes goals and policies of areas to avoid because of inherent threats, such as a floodplain. The City has flood maps identifying parts of the City that are prone to flooding. Those areas are typically not developed. It is possible the element could identify potential hazards that cause an area to experience more damage from natural disasters; however, existing policies recognize common hazards and guide the type of development. The State Legislature recently adopted wildland

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urban interface codes to address threats from wildfires. It is possible to include choices on land use and within the land use plan of areas prone to flooding or wildfire.

Manager Medrud reported the first section of policies address how the Land Use Element aligns and supports other elements in the Comprehensive Plan and with other plans of other jurisdictions in the county. Examples include a Neighborhood Appendix intended to plan at a neighborhood level, policies addressing a new community center, and actions required for coordination with other plans, such as the Port of Olympia Master Plan or the City's Historic District Master Plan.

The second section of the framework addresses GMA goals for compact development. The section ties to the Capital Facilities Plan as part of the Land Use Element. The protection of critical areas is also included.

Manager Medrud reported a number of sections address innovative land management techniques. Many of the options are good ideas such as cluster housing, transfer of development rights, and other measures to preserve land in one area while developing another property more intensely. Trade-offs will be important to consider. The policies will likely be explored because of the interaction between the Comprehensive Plan and the Development Code. The Comprehensive Plan establishes the broad outline structure for the desired direction of the Development Code. Many of the policies addressing zero lot development, planned unit developments, transfer of development rights, and other options are included in Title 18 of the Zoning Code. It is also important to measure whether the options have been effective and whether any adjustments might be required to ensure the options are working as envisioned. The section also addresses annexations and design standards.

The third section addresses adequate public services and ties to the Capital Facilities Plan to ensure land uses have adequate water, sewer, and that the transportation systems are developed to urban standards. The sections ties directly to the City's Water System Plan and Sanitary Sewer Plan.

Chair Robbins asked whether the policies addressing service availability encompass the notion of efficient provision of services. Manager Medrud said it ties to the GMA requirement that new growth must include the necessary services to support new growth.

The policies also include some statements concerning development utilizing septic tanks with the intent of connecting eventually to sewer if the septic system fails or if sewer services become readily available. At

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some point, transitioning from septic to sewer will occur to satisfy the goals of protecting water supplies.

Land Use Goal 4 ties to the Housing Element by encouraging land use planners to support affordable housing. Many discussions are anticipated regarding the goal as the state has allocated different levels of affordable housing throughout the county. Approximately 30,000 new housing units are anticipated over the next 20 years across the county. The bulk of new housing to address is for income levels of less than 80% of the median income level. The more efficient way to provide that housing at that level is to increase density, such as apartment buildings versus single-family housing. Staff and the Commission will examine the comprehensive land use map and zoning map to identify areas where upzoning might be possible. The current map identifies housing for median incomes of 100% or more through single-family zones but lacks addressing median income levels of 80% or less. Questions to ask Ms. Hodgson at the next meeting is how other jurisdictions are addressing the issue and options to consider when addressing state mandates.

A number of policies within the framework support a variety of GMA requirements and City goals. Increasing density within low-density neighborhoods is a question to consider in terms of how to affect those types of changes within existing neighborhoods to the extent possible, such as reducing the appearance of structures through design standards. The policies address manufactured housing as state law requires jurisdictions to allow for manufactured homes in all residential zones. The City's policies currently support GMA goals of encouraging higher density residential uses and providing affordable housing. The uses should blend within the existing character of the community. Options to pursue include focusing housing types and densities in corridors where transit access exists.

Chair Robbins asked whether the section supports policies or actions to implement policies using publicly funded or subsidized support. Manager Medrud advised of an opportunity to consider those options; however, those types of initiatives would typically be included in the Housing Element.

Chair Robbins inquired about the possibility of the City purchasing land for affordable housing. Manager Medrud said the issue was addressed during the development of the Housing Action Plan surrounding the use of existing City lands for affordable housing or for habitat for gophers. Currently, the City's supply of land is limited. The City has however, as part of affordable housing efforts utilized grants to support the purchase of small plots of land that often include houses in need of

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renovation. The City purchased land with a local non-profit purchasing and renovating the house for affordable housing. The next opportunity to support that process would likely entail the WSDOT site as it encompasses 10 acres of property located off Capitol Boulevard. The City is actively engaged in the future disposition of the WSDOT site by seeking grants for clean up of the property to position the property for next steps. The City has also received grants for brownfield cleanup of the brewery site to aid in redevelopment of the property. The City will likely need to identify those types of actions as a potential path moving forward.

Commissioner Kirkpatrick commented on the connection of density and the provision of transit service. Manager Medrud advised of a future presentation scheduled by Intercity Transit staff. The City faces a chicken and egg situation whereby the City lacks the density to support transit service. The Land Use Element can demonstrate current growth with higher densities planned in those areas not currently served by transit services.

The next goal addresses transportation and encouraging efficient multimodal transportation systems in coordination with regional, city, state, and county jurisdictions. The Thurston Regional Transportation Plan will be important to review as it ties the City into the larger system within Thurston County. The Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan address trails within the City. Policies encouraging the development of access to transit stops as part of development conditions have evolved over time. Densities drive transit, which requires a review as part of the periodic update. It is also important to reinforce the link between land use and public transportation by encouraging development to occur at urban residential densities along transit corridors and nodes.

Commissioner Kirkpatrick asked whether the intent is to include more actions versus more policies. Manager Medrud said the intent is to reduce the number of policies and focus on implementation measures.

Manager Medrud noted that as previously addressed, reducing the affects from flooding and stormwater management are addressed in land use policies, as well as retention of open space for parks and trails, and recreation opportunities. Some policies address energy efficiency through the Building Code and other City policies, which warrants a closer review to determine whether the policies should be included in the Climate Element rather than the Land Use Element. Other policies pertain to historic preservation and recognition of the airport in the City requiring the structure of development to conform with airport requirements.

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Manager Medrud referred to the City of SeaTac Land Use Element. The city completed its periodic update several years ago and structured each element with a focus on goals, policies, and implementation. The technical discussion, capacity analysis, and other sections are included in a different section. The layout focuses on requirements of the GMA, such as urban centers, policies on the general growth of the city, health, equitable and connected communities with ties to the Transportation Element, healthy foods, access to housing, access to neighborhood services, and citywide land uses (residential, commercial, and industrial and public facilities). One-third of the second chapter focuses on implementation. The policies are detailed and specific. Manager Medrud recommended the Commission review SeaTac's policies.

SeaTac's plan includes specific instructions on the assignment of land uses. The City of Tumwater's Comprehensive Plan designations are similar to zoning districts. In many other jurisdictions, at the Comprehensive Plan level, a broad category of designations is included with single family and multifamily the more traditional designations. One example is residential low density and implementing zone districts of various sizes. The advantage of a one-to-three system affords more flexibility and enables for faster changes. Today, in Tumwater, a property owner wanting to rezone a property from single-family low density to single-family medium density requires a Comprehensive Plan amendment and zoning change entailing a year-long process. To improve efficiencies and promote more avenues to encourage more affordable housing, flexibility is important in terms of the structure of the City's land use designations and zone districts. It would also afford more flexibility in changing zones or expanding zones.

Manager Medrud reviewed SeaTac's implementation plan. Each of the goals and policies are accompanied by implementation strategies, assignments, and the timeframe. Some of the actions are short-term and can be enacted through ordinances. In many cases, the policies speak to multiple ways to address the policies. The plan identifies the process and enables the planning commission, council, as well as the public to develop a roadmap to satisfy the policies. He recommended the Commission review the implementation plan.

Commissioner Tobias cited the land use classification map within SeaTac's Comprehensive Plan. Of special note is how development is confined to a narrow corridor known as *International Way*. Any future development in that area would be confined within the corridor or in adjoining areas in conjunction with regional business uses. At the north end of the Tukwila International Boulevard Transit Station, the area includes some commercial high density with remaining areas of low-density residential uses. Once the transportation hub is developed in the

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area, it affords an opportunity for people to park their car and take the light rail into Seattle. The site could serve either as a destination or as a commuter location. The area north of Highway 518 does not reflect as much opportunity for the same level of regional activities or residential density.

Manager Medrud pointed out that the areas both north and south of the airport were previously purchased. Those areas were single-family neighborhoods developed in the county that were purchased by the Port of Seattle for the airport. International Boulevard serves as the dividing line between the airport and the City of SeaTac. Based on recent conversations with the city's planning director, the City of SeaTac is struggling as to how it plans to address the affordable housing requirements because of the city's land use patterns.

Commissioner Tobias inquired about any height restrictions of areas located near the airport. Manager Medrud said some tall buildings exist along International Boulevard. The areas of primary concern are the north and south areas of the airport. Another underlying factor is most of the councilmembers live in single-family neighborhoods creating less desire for change. Other cities have experienced similar issues as light rail is extended through cities in terms of its impact on both density and neighborhoods.

Chair Robbins cited the importance of context in terms of what the City could provide in provisions and the importance of considering what neighboring communities could provide. It might not be reasonable to pursue all options. Manager Medrud shared that staff members at state agencies have shared that while the state has a vision of what cities would do it is not necessarily the responsibility of the cities to ensure the vision is fulfilled. It is the responsibility of each city to enable the fulfillment of those visions by not erecting barriers.

Discussion ensued on restricted areas within SeaTac that would enable options for both commercial and higher density housing uses. Manager Medrud noted that the majority of work in support of SeaTac's update was completed prior to recent changes in state law surrounding housing. The plan serves as an example of an active plan in a usable format. He noted Ms. Hodgson will share several examples from the City of Renton in terms of the status of the city's process to meet the new state requirements.

Manager Medrud addressed questions about the City of the Lacey's growth in the Hawks Prairie area and wastewater treatment in the City of Tumwater. The City of Lacey's development within the Hawks Prairie area occurred through private developers with Lacey providing



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the development framework in terms of how the area would develop. Currently, the City's wastewater flows to the LOTT Wastewater Plant in the City of Olympia. LOTT Clean Water Alliance previously considered satellite treatment plants on property located along the Deschutes River; however LOTT has moved away from that model. LOTT is focusing on retaining the plant in downtown Olympia.

Chair Robbins inquired about the possibility of the Commission receiving maps of areas that are in transition within the City that are forecasted for future development. Manager Medrud shared that during a recent planning directors conference, participants completed an exercise involving Legos using large aerial maps to assess density and other development requirements. He agreed those types of exercises would be useful to identify future changes within specific areas of the City.

#### **NEXT MEETING DATE:**

The next meeting is scheduled on September 26, 2023.

#### **ADJOURNMENT:**

**Commissioner Tobias moved, seconded by Commissioner Varela, to adjourn the meeting at 8:17 p.m. A voice vote approved the motion unanimously.**

Prepared by Valerie L. Gow, Recording Secretary/President  
Puget Sound Meeting Services, psmsoly@earthlink.net