CONVENE: 7:00 p.m.

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

Staff: Deputy Director Brad Medrud and Associate Planner Dana Bowers.

CHANGES TO AGENDA: There were no changes.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

TUMWATER PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES JUNE 25, 2024:

MOTION: **Commissioner Staff moved, seconded by Commissioner Kotek, to approve the minutes of June 25, 2024 as presented. A voice vote approved the motion unanimously.**

COMMISSIONER'S REPORTS: There were no reports.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Deputy Director Medrud reported the Climate Element is undergoing legal review. The Commission is scheduled to review the element prior to preparation of incorporating the element into the ordinance in the fall. The Lands for Public Purposes Element and the Utilities Element have completed legal review. Progress is occurring on the Housing Technical Guide, but at a slower pace than anticipated. The goal is to complete the document for submission for legal review. The Commission will likely review the document at its last meeting in May to include the entire Housing Element. Staff continues to work on the Conservation Element with a goal to release the document for legal review. The Land Use Element and the Transportation Plan Element will follow.

Progress continues on the draft of the Habitat Conservation Plan with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through biweekly meetings. The goal is to finalize a draft by mid- to late-spring to release to the public. The intent is to schedule NEPA and SEPA reviews shortly thereafter.

Director Matlock is retiring at the end of May after 35 years with the City. A department celebration will be held.

Sam Hunter joined the City as an Associate Planner in the Permit Division.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Chris Lester, Governmental Affairs Director, Thurston County Realtors Association, said he lives close to Tumwater and his children attended Tumwater schools. He has been working with Deputy Director Medrud and Planner Bowers over the last several years. He offered assistance for any housing related issues as a partner within the community.

2025 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PERIODIC UPDATE – LAND USE ELEMENT – PART 1

Deputy Director Medrud advised that the review would cover the differences between Part 1 and Part 2 of the Land Use Element and the planning focus for the element.

Part 1 is intended as a policy document for the Council, staff, and the Commission, which speaks to the importance of readability and understandability of the document. Part 2 is the technical document that reflects how growth will be accommodated in zone districts throughout the City.

Deputy Director Medrud reported the housing allocation process was completed in 2023/2024, as well as the land capacity analysis to ensure sufficient land for housing following the housing allocation process. The Department of Commerce then issued another update to its guidance and advised that the original process completed by staff did not meet new standards. Following some changes, an updated Land Capacity Analysis was completed.

Another important element changed by the Department of Commerce after the analysis was complete was an update to the guidance for completing a land capacity analysis specifically for emergency and transitional housing. The new requirement is to ensure the City had sufficient land in the City to accommodate a potential range of uses. Subsequently, the City contracted with Thurston Regional Planning Council. The analysis was completed at the end of March reflecting that the City had adequate land to accommodate those uses. The information enables staff to complete the technical document.

The Department of Commerce assigned each county a base number of required housing units within counties. Jurisdictions within each county participated in a process to allocate the housing needs by each jurisdiction through a consensus process. Housing units required to be allowed in the City and its urban growth area from 2020 to 2045 total 9,192 new units. The units are categorized into different housing types. The number determines the type of land uses the City should plan to accommodate. Because of the large

need for housing for those with household incomes under 80% of the area median income, the type of housing to accommodate that population is multifamily versus single-family detached, which creates land use implications. The result will shift the City's landscape over time with different types of land uses.

Staff reviewed household size from the 2020 census to estimate the housing numbers to forecast a population estimate. Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC) completed the original estimates in 2018 for population growth based on the state forecast. Staff is utilizing the most recent census to determine the number of people per household of 2.39. Since the 1970s, the figure has declined reflecting a rate of 2.2 people per household in 2010. However, the number is beginning to increase for a variety of reasons surrounding economics and larger households, etc.

As the City is planning for both the City and its urban growth area, population and housing forecasts encompass both areas. The original housing allocation process divided the areas.

Employment estimates are from 2017. The employment forecast prepared by TRPC identifies an additional 10,000 jobs by 2045.

Chair Robbins inquired as to whether the census data includes more current employment and population estimates. Deputy Director Medrud explained that the census is completed once every ten years and is supplemented with the American Community Survey annually. Update survey data is through 2023, which were used for planning for housing and land use updates. The data includes a large margin of error especially for smaller jurisdictions. Staff is inclined to use TRPC data for both housing and land use. However, for the employment forecast, staff prefers not using census data.

Chair Robbins asked whether the forecast reflects a range rather than a specific number because of the variability in population, housing, and employment. Deputy Director Medrud advised that a specific number has been identified for housing whereas population and employment are more flexible. It is important that the City ensures there are sufficient commercial and industrial lands to accommodate the population range.

Deputy Director Medrud reviewed the structure of the Land Use Element. Part 1 of the Land Use Element – Goals, Policies, and Implementation Actions of the Land Use Element is structured similarly to Part 1 of the Housing Element. The intent of separating the goals, policies, and implementation actions from the technical information for each element is to make it easier for policymakers

and the community to use the document. Introduction Chapter 1 provides a short background on the purpose of the Element and an explanation of how to read the Element. Chapter 2 discusses the Element's connection to the land use goals of the state Growth Management Act. Chapter 4 lists the fourteen land use goals grouped under five types of goals. The land use goals are not listed in order of priority. Chapter 5 presents each of Tumwater's land use goals, policies, and implementation actions in detail with an explanation on the importance of each goal, what City department is responsible for implementation, and the timeline of the actions. Comments are provided that discuss the source of each of the goals, policies, and implementation actions.

Deputy Director Medrud encouraged the Commission to review the document and provide feedback if information is unclear.

Similar to the Housing Element, the Land Use Element includes 14 goals that are grouped by similar categories. Deputy Director Medrud reviewed the 14 goals:

GOAL LU-1: Ensure the Land Use Element is implementable and coordinated with other City, neighboring jurisdictional and regional plans. *Deputy Director Medrud explained the importance of the County-Wide Policy, which serves as a translation of the GMA at the county level for comprehensive planning. The Policy enables jurisdictional comprehensive plans within the county to align and connect. Development in the urban growth areas is addressed in the County-Wide Policy.*

GOAL LU-2: Ensure development occurs in an orderly and cost-efficient manner to best utilize available land and public services, conserve natural resources, protect and enhance critical areas and open space, address equity and climate change, and reduce sprawl.

GOAL LU-3: Ensure adequate public services, facilities, and utilities are available to proposed and existing development.

GOAL LU-4: Create land use patterns that increase the availability of affordable housing for all income groups. *Planner Bowers commented on the importance of ensuring housing is distributed throughout the community to avoid creating districts or barriers. Staff was asked whether the process for approving the development of several multistory apartment complexes located off Littlerock Road in the area of Walmart and Home Depot considered the goals of affordable housing and equity. Deputy Director Medrud said that at the time of the development proposals for many of the large retail stores, equity and affordable housing were not considered as the*

City desired retail uses with large parking areas in that area of the City. When the City changed provisions to enable five-story residential uses in the General Commercial zone, the intent was to evolve those areas into more mixed use areas to afford opportunities for people to live, work, and access retail services without using a car. The market changed after 2020. At that time, the Commission considered some changes to the code to focus less on height and more on mixed uses. The transition from policy to code to development took approximately 15 years.

Planner Bowers added that often the City cannot plan on changes despite code changes because there can be larger cultural shifts that are not possible to plan for or predict.

Commissioner Kirkpatrick noted that prior to the development of the Fred Meyer complex a large hotel with plenty of parking was located on the site. The redevelopment proposal was a commercial-to-commercial use and required no changes in codes to accommodate the development. The Fred Meyer complex served as the impetus of retail development in that area of the City.

Discussion ensued on the lack of large conference and meeting space within the region following redevelopment of several hotel sites that hosted large conferences in the tri-city area.

GOAL LU-5: Ensure land use patterns support efficient multimodal transportation systems in coordination with City and regional transportation plans.

GOAL LU-6: Ensure physical limitations of the land are considered during the development process.

GOAL LU-7: Support development of all types of residential uses.

GOAL LU-8: Support development of commercial and mixed uses in appropriate areas.

GOAL LU-9: Support development of manufacturing, industrial, and warehouse uses in appropriate areas.

GOAL LU-10: Retain and enhance open space, parks, trails, and space for recreational opportunities.

GOAL LU-11: Support development of public facilities in appropriate areas.

GOAL LU-12: Provide for the location of essential public facilities.

GOAL LU-13: Protect the Olympia Regional Airport from incompatible land uses and activities that could affect the use of airport facilities and operations while reflecting the existing urban environment adjacent to the Airport.

GOAL LU-14: Preserve and protect significant historical and cultural sites.

Deputy Director Medrud encouraged the Commission to consider how the Housing Element, Land Use Element, Climate Element, and the other elements connect or create conflicts. The 15 GMA goals are not necessarily in harmony, such as protecting the environment while promoting economic development as it can often create conflicts. The important aspect of all the Elements is how those conflicts are addressed.

Commissioner Kirkpatrick inquired as to whether the City Council supports residential uses within the area of the airport. Deputy Director Medrud replied that the Council has not addressed the issue other than through individual discussions concerning residential uses near the airport. It speaks to the balance between existing development and potential changes to the airport in the future that could affect existing development. The discussion with the Council has not occurred at this time but is planned to address issues. The issue becomes magnified when considering potential changes to the airport in terms of flights and frequency.

Commissioner Kirkpatrick recalled that during the development of the Town Center Plan, the committee disagreed on several development possibilities. The first was not allowing drive through uses, which eventually changed when the City allowed a drive through for a local bank. The second issue was whether to allow multifamily residential uses in the area.

Chair Robbins asked about the potential of recognizing partnership opportunities, such as cost-share and revenue sharing arrangements and could align with land use. Deputy Director Medrud said it is likely partnerships play a lesser role in land use development but could benefit regional efforts to address homelessness and affordable housing. Because the scope of need is so high, regional efforts are necessary to help fund and manage those types of issues as they are typically far beyond the capacity of any one city. It is also important to present a united voice when seeking funding from the state or the federal government.

Chair Robbins commented on potential partnerships to develop a

convention center or other similar facilities, which speaks to land use. Deputy Director Medrud advised that the elements that could focus on a convention center would be the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan or the Economic Development Plan.

Commissioner Staff asked how the City determines which historical or cultural sites are significant. Deputy Director Medrud explained that the City has a designated Historic District located around the area of the old brewery. Within the community, many sites have been designated as historic by the state. The issue is considering what sites or objects should be preserved in the future and the process for the designation and the cost-benefit tradeoff for the owner of the property.

Commissioner Kirkpatrick asked whether the statement that there is sufficient land to meet Tumwater's goals are included in the Land Use Element or another element. Deputy Director Medrud said the Land Use Element and its technical analysis addresses whether the City has sufficient land use capacity based in large part by TRPC's analysis of region-wide land capacity. Land capacity is required to be addressed within the Land Use Element.

Chair Robbins asked whether the capacity issue speaks to the need for annexation. Deputy Director Medrud said land capacity does not require a change to the urban growth area, which is established by the county. Each jurisdiction has a role to accommodate growth within existing lands. The City is planning for both the City and the urban growth area at urban levels. Chair Robbins asked whether the City would need to expand the urban growth area to accommodate growth beyond the planning horizon. Deputy Director Medrud described the intricacies involving property owners of a large parcel, as the City cannot force development of land, which speaks to the element of market choice and what lands would be developed and the financial capability of developing projects. As the City develops, the nature of development may change.

Chair Robbins recalled reading information about annexation of county islands in the Element. Deputy Director Medrud replied that during the 2016 update of the Comprehensive Plan, 15 county islands were located within the City limits. The islands ranged in size from a large subdivision to several parcels. Since then, the City annexed all the islands in one island annexation process. He added that the intent is not creating islands when annexing lands. Through the prior annexation approval process, the Thurston County Boundary Review Board often changed annexation boundaries, which in some cases created county islands.

Deputy Director Medrud asked the Commission to review the remaining policies and goals. Within the 2016 Land Use Element, implementation actions were addressed two ways. Unlike other elements in the Comprehensive Plan, the Land Use Element included 16 implementation actions identified in a separate section following the goals and policies. The update has moved from that model. Many of the implementation actions have been transferred to the updated Element in various forms.

Commissioner Kirkpatrick said the color formatting of the document of light blue and dark blue is confusing. It would be helpful for all policies to be of one color and associated actions in another color. Deputy Director Medrud affirmed that at this time, staff is beginning to format the document and is experimenting to ensure clear distinctions. He encouraged Commissioners to submit formatting recommendations.

Deputy Director Medrud noted that in addition to the goals, policies, and implementation actions, staff added information as to their respective origination. In many cases, the information existed while some information reflected a combination of existing and new language, as well as new language.

Chair Robbins asked about any instances where information was deleted because it was accomplished or became obsolete. Deputy Director Medrud affirmed some actions were accomplished that were not included. Staff can provide the Commission with a copy of the deleted table reflecting information that has been deleted.

Planner Bowers described some information the Commission will receive that improves the readability of the information.

Discussion ensued on the importance of the documentation to be readable and concise for the public. Planner Bower explained the difficulty of condensing goals and policies, as each goal and policy have different meanings. Feedback from the Commission assists staff in ensuring the language is specific and that goals and actions are measurable.

Commissioner Kirkpatrick stressed the importance of any references to neighborhoods to reflect neighborhoods within the current Comprehensive Plan. He asked whether “neighborhoods” would be included in the definitions. Deputy Director Medrud said the suggestion is on point because when the plan addresses neighborhoods, it speaks to the subdistricts of the City and not necessarily a residential neighborhood. Staff will ensure clarity throughout the document.

Deputy Director Medrud said the schedule includes a briefing to the Commission on Part 2 and updated Part 1 for the Land Use Element at the Commission's June 10, 2025 meeting. The briefing will include a review of the document format. Input from the Commission will inform the format when combining the documents later in the summer.

NEXT MEETING DATE: The next meeting is scheduled on April 22, 2025.

ADJOURNMENT: **Commissioner Staff moved, seconded by Commissioner Kirkpatrick, to adjourn the meeting at 8:18 p.m. A voice vote approved the motion unanimously.**

Prepared by Valerie L. Gow, Recording Secretary/President
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