

**TUMWATER PLANNING COMMISSION**  
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**CONVENE:** 7:00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Chair Elizabeth Robbins and Commissioners Grace Edwards, Terry Kirkpatrick, Michael Tobias, and Anthony Varela.

Excused: Commissioner Brandon Staff.

Staff: Planning Manager Brad Medrud and Land Use and Housing Planner Erika Smith-Erickson.

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

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

**MANAGER'S REPORT:** Manager Medrud referred to the updated meeting schedule. The meeting scheduled on March 12, 2024 has been cancelled. The next meeting is scheduled on March 26, 2024. The Commission is scheduled to participate in a bus tour with the City Council on April 9, 2024. Staff is preparing the tour itinerary. The tour is intended to visit some examples of middle housing to see how some of the examples could be incorporated within City design policies moving forward, as well as a discussion on housing issues. The tour includes neighborhoods in the Tumwater and Olympia.

In June through August, some joint work sessions with the Council are scheduled to review different elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

It is likely the Legislature will extend the deadline for completion of the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update by six months to the end of December 2025.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** Chair Robbins welcomed several students in attendance.

**2025 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PERIODIC UPDATE – COMMUNITY OUTREACH:** Manager Medrud briefed Commissioners on the status of community outreach for the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update.

Community engagement is guided by the Community Engagement Plan. The first open house was held on January 31, 2024. Staff compiled all public comments received both online and in-person during the open house. More outreach activities are planned during 2024. The process builds on work completed on the Community Engagement Plan. Based on some new state requirements as part of the Housing Element update and the new Climate Element, areas of focus will include engaging communities that have not typically been involved in the update

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process. The objective of the community engagement process is to provide the community and stakeholders with equal opportunities to participate in the Periodic Update process.

For the Commission, the focus will be assisting staff in identifying various community members and community groups related to housing and other community economic groups. Manager Medrud encouraged members to provide any contact information for individuals or groups who should be contacted. Staff plans to schedule individual meetings to initiate the outreach process over the next several months. Staff is seeking as many opportunities as possible to reach a broader audience.

The Community Engagement Plan identifies tactics, strategies, and platforms intended to inform and consult with the community throughout the update. The entire process is intended to be flexible.

Five steps of the Periodic Update process include:

- Engage the Community
- Gather and Analyze Data
- Evaluate Policies
- Revise Policies
- Review and Update Regulations

The City contracted with a consultant to assist staff on the middle housing development code update. Several consultants responded to the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for the Climate Element. Two proposals were submitted for assistance in updating the Transportation Plan. Staff is working through another RFQ process for the update of the Economic Development Plan. Policy revision steps are scheduled later in the year and into 2025. Concurrently, staff will review and recommend updates to development regulations.

The City's website includes all documents associated with the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update process.

The first online survey closed on February 14, 2024. Approximately 920 surveys were completed. The Commission will receive a briefing on the results of the survey at its March 26, 2024 meeting. A number of participants expressed interest in addressing some specific issues surrounding the elements.

As part of the housing update, individual conversations are being scheduled with different organizations and individuals over the next several months to set the framework for the larger update. The intent is to provide more opportunities for focused hybrid open houses and a one-time in-person meeting. Manager Medrud encouraged

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Commissioners to share information on potential organizations and groups that might be interested in receiving information about the update.

The initial open house agenda spanned a two-hour hybrid meeting with the first part sharing information on the open house process and introductions to staff and the topics. A series of online polls, as well as written polls were offered. Staff presented a 70-minute update on all elements followed by a question and answer session. The meeting ended with summary of the update process. Sixteen individuals participated virtually and 43 individuals attended in person with seven staff members.

The majority of participants own a home in the City, which is not necessarily reflective of the City's entire population with approximately 45% of the community renting a residence. The population of Tumwater is approximately 27,000 people with 26,000 different types of employment positions in the City. Most community members work elsewhere. Staff is working on ways to capture more individuals who work in the City as part of the update of the Economic Development Plan as well as those individuals who own a business in the City.

In term of race and ethnicity, most of the open house participants were white with some Hispanic participants, which is not reflective of the community population according to the recent U.S. Census. According to the Census, the City's population makeup is less than 80% white with a mix of other races.

Participants learned about the open house through word of mouth, social media, postcard mailing, from staff, next-door app, senior center, schoolteacher, and other sources.

Some of the questions asked by participants covered a wide spectrum of issues:

- Are more essential facilities like schools and social services being proposed? *The City works closely with the Tumwater School District and the Olympia School District as part of the capital planning process to inform each school district about population growth and future land uses and development in the City.*
- When will the survey results be posted? *Survey results are scheduled to be posted in March 2024.*
- Is the City trying to attract specific businesses or identifying any that are lacking? *The question is addressed as part of the update of the Economic Development Plan.*

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- How will affordable housing be provided for future generations?
- How can I be more involved with the housing challenges in our community?
- How were housing projections determined? *City housing projections are based on projections provided by the state to each county. Counties work with local jurisdictions to allocate housing needs for the next 20 years.*
- How will density, land use, and zoning designations change? *Changes are anticipated because of the new requirement to accommodate housing for all economic classes.*
- How will the E-Street extension project be addressed? *The City is scheduling a separate meeting about the project during early 2024.*
- Will old or unused sites be considered for redevelopment?
- What are the steps to address the housing crisis?
- How do we create walkable neighborhoods and needed sidewalks? *An emphasis of the Transportation Plan update is walking, bicycling, and other modes of travel other than a vehicle.*
- How do we fund housing, services, essential facilities, and social services?

Commissioner Edwards inquired about the possibility of using the questions from the community open house to create a frequently asked question and answer document and posting it on the website. Manager Medrud replied that the Community Engagement Plan includes information on ways the City will respond to comments and questions. Staff is working to develop a document to include on the website.

Manager Medrud reported the three focus areas of the update are affordable housing, climate and environment, and transportation. Open house participants expressed interest in all topics in addition to other categories. Some suggested topics were shared on housing with participants supporting all options. Similar feedback was received on climate and environment by addressing greenhouse gas emissions and climate adaptation. Much interest was conveyed by participants on transportation forecasting and modeling with some interest in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and access to public transportation. As part of the Request for Proposal process for the consultant for the Transportation Plan update, the City included a specific request for public engagement during the update of the Transportation Plan.

Participants were asked about preferred ways to learn about future conversations (ranked by preference):

- Email
- City Website

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- Social Media
- Postcard/Direct Mail
- Utility Bill Insert
- Text
- Council/Public Meetings
- Doorhanger
- Cable

Manager Medrud summarized the phases of the update process:

*Phase 1 – 2024-2025 – Community Engagement*

- Data Collection
- Review of existing Plan Elements, Development Code, and State Requirements
- Community Engagement – Website, Social Media, Community Survey, and Open Houses

*Phase 2 – 2024 – Plan Development*

- Open Houses on specific topics such as housing, climate, and transportation
- Planning Commission and City Council meetings on proposed amendments (Joint City Tours with City Council, Tuesday, April 9, 2024 – Housing & Tuesday, August 13, 2024 – Transportation)

*Phase 3 – 2025 – Legislative Adoption Process*

- Planning Commission review and public hearings(s)
- City Council review and approval

Commissioner Tobias asked about the possibility of other surveys including an option for participants to rank their issue in order of importance or priority to help determine a weighted average of the top issues of importance. A ranked choice survey could be useful for the City and the Commission. Manager Medrud replied that the survey was intended specifically for the participants of the open house. Survey data includes some ranked data. The survey was based on a willingness to participate rather than a scientific survey.

Chair Robbins noted that many of the responses are interrelated. She asked about potential ways to create the appropriate context between the different elements because they are all interdependent. Manager Medrud agreed and indicated that staff attempted to present each element separately to assist the community in learning about the individual components of the plan as a way to avoid overwhelming them with so much information.

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Chair Robbins asked about any outreach to the Squaxin Island Tribe. Manager Medrud affirmed that staff is pursuing a process to outreach the tribes to include the Squaxin Island Tribe, Nisqually Indian Tribe, and Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation. Staff will be contacting each Tribal Chair and tribal staff, extending invitations, and sharing information about the update process.

Chair Robbins suggested contacting different cultural community festivals/events to share information. Manager Medrud confirmed staff is pursuing those types of avenues. Planner Smith-Erickson also contacted local businesses and groups to share information about the update and community open houses and other engagement opportunities.

Planner Smith-Erickson added that the City hired a Community Engagement Specialist who is assisting staff with community outreach and social media. The first open house served as a resource to assist in identifying other ways to reach a broader audience.

Manager Medrud noted that the Department is currently in the process of hiring a new Senior Planner. The position will assist in the update process as well.

**NEXT MEETING  
DATE:**

The next meeting is scheduled on March 26, 2024.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**Commissioner Tobias moved, seconded by Commissioner Kirkpatrick, to adjourn the meeting at 7:37 p.m. A voice vote approved the motion unanimously.**

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