
CNA Recommended and Suggested Changes to "Neighborhood Character"

1 message

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The following is the result of the CNA Neighborhood Character committee's work on the subject.

Recommendation

The CNA expresses concerns about the Council's proposed definition that would leave out important aspects and utility of the concept. As the suggested change proposed by Planning staff recognizes, there are additional factors that contribute to neighborhood character.

The committee met to work on the language for a proposed recommendation. That recommendation is to modify the Council wording and place it in the Values and Vision section of the Comprehensive Plan as follows:

Our community ~~values defines "neighborhood character"~~ as accessible, sustainable, and culturally inclusive neighborhoods. These are defined as:

- *Accessible: Includes ADA compliancy, multi-mobility, and housing affordability.*
- *Sustainable: Promotes a healthy environment, a diverse and resilient local economy, and historic preservation, including, reuse, and adaptability of existing buildings.*
- *Culturally inclusive: Recognizes, supports and promotes diverse housing types, strong arts and historic preservation, and the various contributions of diverse Olympians past and present.*

The committee felt the CNA's recommended change achieved the goal of recognizing the Council's proposed definition did not provide guidance about what attributes distinguish one neighborhood from another. Instead, the Council's definition spoke to the city as a whole about what all Olympians value and should be placed in the "Values and Vision" section of the Comprehensive Plan.

The Committee also suggested that the additional bullet proposed by staff be modified and placed in the Land Use and Urban Design section of the Comprehensive Plan. Starting with the specifics in Joyce Phillips' proposed bullet as the base, the committee suggested modifications to add more specificity regarding what attributes should be among those included in consideration of "neighborhood character".

The committee suggested the following:

(Note: The existing Comp Plan language, before and after proposed addition, is shown below to provide helpful context).

Olympia was once a port-oriented community with a central business district and compact single-family neighborhoods. Now, its land-use pattern is more suburban, with commercial development taking place outside of downtown, and lower-density neighborhoods with fewer street connections. Over the next 20 years, as Olympia becomes a more urban place, the pattern of land use and design of urban areas will change as we accommodate an expanding population while retaining our community's character and heritage.

Neighborhood character is an amalgam of various elements that give a neighborhood its distinct "identity." Neighborhood characteristics are not stagnant and will change over time. Consideration of neighborhood character will vary by the unique features of a neighborhood and includes its physical, social and economic attributes that contribute to its sense of place and identity. These elements may include, for example, a neighborhood's land use, urban design, visual resources, historic resources, socioeconomics, traffic, and/or noise. This includes design elements of buildings (mass, scale, materials, setting, and setbacks), parking, parks and open space, provision of City utilities, street grids and connections, and street trees.

The City will balance its goals and policies by considering potential impacts to the unique geography, character or historical context of a residential neighborhood to provide the best outcome for the community as a whole and consistent with our values. (Read more in the Community Values and Vision chapter).

This Plan envisions gradually increasing densities in Olympia accompanied by attractive streets and buildings arranged for the convenience of pedestrians. The location, mix and relationship of land uses to each other and to our streets will be crucial as will be the character of commercial and residential areas, parks, and open spaces. The Plan envisions new development that will reinforce the community's identity, urban design preferences, and historic form. Selected major streets will gradually transform into attractive, higher density, mixed residential and commercial "urban corridors" with frequent transit service.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our input.

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Larry Dzieza, Chair

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