

August 21, 2024

To: Thurston County Commissioners and Urban Growth Management Subcommittee
Re: **Minority opinion regarding recommendation on Urban Growth Area land swaps**

The Cities of Olympia and Tumwater voted against the recommendation to the Thurston County Commission for policy language for the Countywide Planning Policies (CWPPs) regarding Urban Growth Area (UGA) land swaps at the Urban Growth Management (UGM) Subcommittee. Our vote against this recommendation does not reflect a specific perspective on the issue of UGA land swaps, but rather what we consider to be poor process for advancing policies that impact us all.

The purpose of the UGM Subcommittee is to fulfill the requirement of the Growth Management Act that counties consult with cities and towns on changes to the CWPPs. The Subcommittee should allow the jurisdictions the opportunity to deliberate and collaborate on shared recommendations to the Thurston County Commission. The intent of having UGA land swaps on the agenda for our meeting on August 19 was to discuss the possibility of directing staff to expedite the development of UGA land swap policies so that we could make a recommendation sooner than 2025, which was the timeline that was previously established by the UGM Subcommittee. Both the Cities of Olympia and Tumwater favored this approach. Instead, a motion was made to recommend specific policy language that had not been vetted by committee members, our planning staff, or our councilmates.

A majority of the UGM Subcommittee voted in favor of recommending this specific policy language. This effectively cut the jurisdictions out of the formal collaborative policymaking process on a likely controversial issue, which received public comment that expressed both support and concern. The deliberation that should have occurred among all the impacted jurisdictions did not take place and now will not occur in a setting that is available to the public. We request that the Thurston County Commission address this shortcoming by consulting the planning staff of the jurisdictions prior to bringing proposed policy language forward for a public hearing. It will be up to the planning staff at each of the jurisdictions to engage and represent the perspectives of their elected officials to ensure full consultation.

Signed,

Dani Madrone, Olympia City Council

Eileen Swarthout, Tumwater City Council