

ATTACHMENT 2

Jeff Ward Comments on Comprehensive Plan Edits

Planning Commission Meeting - October 14, 2025

Prepared by Jeff Ward

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Jeff Ward Comments on 2025-10-14 PC Meeting Draft Policies

This document lists edits from the meeting packet with corresponding comments from meeting discussion items.

PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE

Parks - Large Group Gathering Facilities (Page 7)

Edit: Parks, f., 83, Outdoor Activities - Existing: Provide more facilities for large group gatherings in parks.

Comment by Jeff: Has this already been accomplished with the concert pavilion? What is "enough" and how do we measure success? Policy says "provide more" but doesn't define target or adequacy. How many large group gathering facilities does the city need? What constitutes a "large group gathering facility"? What gaps remain if the concert pavilion didn't fulfill this need?

Open Space - Public and Private Co-Owned (Page 7)

Edit: Open Space, i., 83, Open Space - Existing: Promote the conservation of open spaces that are in both public and private ownership.

Comment by Jeff: What examples exist of co-owned open spaces in Oak Harbor? Why are co-owned lands specifically called out? Should preservation be based on ownership or on attributes (connectivity, scenic value, ecological function, cultural significance)? Preserving something as open space purely because of ownership structure seems odd without understanding the policy intent.

Open Space - Wildlife Habitat (Page 6)

Edit: Open Space, (unnumbered), 82, Open Space - Existing: Protect open space lands that provide forage, migration, and habitat for wildlife.

Comment by Jeff: All lands provide some of this. Strategic areas that are critical to island health and mitigate problems for the city should be identified.

Open Space - View Corridors (Page 8)

Edit: Open Space, j., 83, Open Space - Existing: Identify and protect important 'view corridors' that provide visual access to scenic vistas.

Comment by Jeff: What constitutes a "scenic vista" when the whole island is scenic? What is the mechanism for protecting view corridors - restricting building heights, limiting density, or public acquisition? Paradox: There isn't a point in protecting a viewshed by limiting development if that leads to

developing the thing you want to look at. Strategic urban density preserves rural scenic character better than view corridor restrictions.

Open Space - Trust Fund (Page 8)

Edit: Open Space, p., 83, Open Space - Existing: Establish an 'open space trust fund' for the protection, preservation, and potential acquisition of open spaces through which individuals, organizations, governments, trusts, foundations, businesses, and other entities may contribute.

Comment by Jeff: Should this trust fund be strategically focused on the UGA to preserve remaining farms and forests? This would create a defined urban/rural buffer - allowing strategic density within city limits while permanently preserving scenic, agricultural, and ecological character of surrounding areas. Would support GMA goals and resolve the preservation paradox.

Open Space - Development Regulations (Page 8)

Edit: Open Space, q., 83, Open Space - Existing: Review and revise as necessary the City's development regulations to ensure that adequate provisions are made to preserve open space as land is developed.

Comment by Jeff: What is "adequate" open space and what is its goal? Open space for the sake of open space doesn't make a healthy city - it's the exact opposite of a city. Should this be about planned, functional parks rather than just "open space"? This policy risks creating fragmented development and auto-dependent sprawl. Cities require density and concentration to function as cities.

Recreation - Regional Ball Park (Page 9)

Edit: Recreation, b., 84, Activity Community - Existing: Develop a regional ball park complex to serve local needs and attract tournament level sports competition.

Comment by Jeff: If this is "regional," shouldn't Coupeville and Island County be consulted? Regional facilities typically serve multiple jurisdictions. Has there been regional discussion about this concept? Would partner jurisdictions contribute funding or land? Where would this be located?

Parks - Concessionaire Policy (Page 9)

Edit: Parks, h., 84, Parks - Existing: Prepare a concessionaire policy and related ordinance for the City's shoreline and community parks.

Comment by Jeff: What problem is this solving? Policy doesn't explain what issues the current OHMC has that need to be addressed. Why make a special ordinance rather than use existing regulations?

Parks - Community Events Support (Page 10)

Edit: Parks, i., 84, Parks - Existing: Support and encourage opportunities for community events, sports and recreation rentals, local vendors, local performances, and other local programs.

Comment by Jeff: How will this actually be done? This is non-specific, un-actionable language. Missing the "by doing x, y, z" part. Would be stronger if it specified mechanisms: streamlined permitting, fee structures, promotion, facility reservations, etc.

Parks - Pocket Parks (Page 10)

Edit: Parks, j., 84, Parks - Existing: Develop guidelines to promote private properties and existing developments to provide pocket parks along the City's arterial streets.

Comment by Jeff: Do pocket parks actually work in this context? Is this just a big green space in a parking lot that nobody uses? Wouldn't it be better to have dense services there and then have the city provide a park that combined the micro areas into a more usable, maintained area? This seems to fragment both development and park space without clear benefit.

Parks - Facility Upgrades (Page 10)

Edit: Parks, k., 84, Parks - Existing: Upgrade existing structures and facilities to make them safe and extend their life and usefulness.

Comment by Jeff: Does this add value beyond obvious infrastructure maintenance? Should this instead be something more proactive like: "Create an annual survey of recreational services and infrastructure that helps proactively identify maintenance and safety issues"? Current language doesn't guide decision-making or prioritization.

Parks - Lighting Policy (Page 10)

Edit: General, d., 85, Parks - Existing: Prepare a lighting policy and associated ordinance for the City's community and neighborhood parks.

Comment by Jeff: Why is this needed? Doesn't say why this is needed above and beyond existing OHMC and other applicable codes. What problems with current lighting standards justify a special policy/ ordinance?

New Policy - Marina Infrastructure Revenue (Page 11)

Edit: Development (NEW) - Existing: (none) - **Proposed: Rehabilitate part of current infrastructure into revenue generating facilities.**

Comment by Jeff: What infrastructure and for what purpose? Should identify the infrastructure and what the revenue is intended to fund. Cities aren't money-making endeavors just to make money. If we can

provide services that enrich the lives of the people of OH, without charging them, all the better. What is the purpose of generating revenue? What service or need would it fund?

New Goal - Arts and Recreation Integration (Page 11)

Edit: Arts and Recreation (NEW GOAL) - Existing: (none) - Proposed: Promote the expansion of Arts and Culture in Oak Harbor's parks, recreation, open space and other public spaces.

Comment by Jeff: Should this explicitly reference the OH Arts Plan? Perhaps a whole new section should be put in place that says "actions supporting the OH Arts plan" rather than scattering references throughout. The Waterfront Vision to Action Plan recently approved could also be integrated here.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

New Goal - Land Use for Economic Growth (Page 13)

Edit: (NEW GOAL) - Existing: (none) - Proposed: Ensure the land use and development regulations provide opportunities for diverse economic growth.

Comment by Jeff: Is the goal that regulations do this? Or that there are opportunities for diverse economic growth? Seems like diverse economic growth is the goal, and a way to achieve this is through land use and development regulations. Should be reframed: "Support diverse economic growth through land use and development regulations that provide opportunities..."

New Policy - Economic Relationships (Page 13)

Edit: (NEW POLICY) - Existing: (none) - Proposed: Maintain strong relationships with key economic groups and industries to understand change in economic conditions.

Comment by Jeff: Should this be more specific about implementation? Suggestion: "Identify key economic groups and industries and develop relationships via [x, y, z] in order to understand changes in economic conditions" - [x, y, z] could be "an annual development workshop" or other similar actionable activities. Current language doesn't specify how relationships will be maintained. Where are the resources to implement these actions?

New Policy - Economic Data Review (Page 13)

Edit: (NEW POLICY) - Existing: (none) - Proposed: Periodically review economic data and supplement with City data for accurate employment capacity.

Comment by Jeff: More actionable would be: "Provide to the City Council an annual report on economic data to supplement city data for accurate employment capacity." This specifies who receives the information, when (annually), and the purpose. Creates accountability and a clear implementation mechanism.

New Policy - Development Regulation Review (Page 14)

Edit: (NEW POLICY) - Existing: (none) - **Proposed:** Review development regulations to reduce barriers to key industries that provide job opportunities for residents.

Comment by Jeff: When and how often? More actionable: Provide a report (similar to previous comment) or establish a regular review cycle. Who conducts the review? Planning Department? Economic development staff? What triggers a review - annual, when barriers are identified, when industries request changes?

Waterfront - Marina Partnership (Page 14)

Edit: Goal 2, 136, Waterfront Redevelopment - Existing: Implement the Waterfront Redevelopment, Branding and Marketing Program to increase visitor spending and enhance the quality of life and economic vitality of Oak Harbor.

Comment by Jeff: Should this reference the Waterfront Vision to Action Plan? This policy and following policies seem to be implementing the Vision to Action Plan. Should they explicitly say "Implement the Waterfront Vision to Action Plan" or at least reference it? Would provide clarity and ensure consistency with the recently approved plan.

Economic Development - Navy Diversification (Page 16)

Edit: Goal 5, 5.b, 138, Military Diversification - Existing: Diversification assistance should be directed towards helping businesses and employees most likely impacted by military realignments.

Comment by Jeff: Should this be broader and more strategic? Always have a plan B if the Navy leaves. Maybe this should broaden in scope: "Create a long-term strategic plan for assessing opportunities and challenges that will present themselves if base operations were to significantly decline or completely stop." This doesn't mean encourage the base to leave or that we don't support the base. But doing a periodic review could lead to simple, actionable mitigations.

Economic Development - Strip Development Consolidation (Page 14)

Edit: Goal 3, 3.b, 137, Development - Existing: The City should support consolidation of segmental strip development into organized groupings by assisting with planning and upgrading of site improvements.

Comment by Jeff: What does this mean in practice? Does this mean better shepherding of permits? There are huge parking lots that are dramatically underused for much of our retail-zoned spaces - are there zoning changes that would enable that space to be recaptured/repurposed? What about programs to encourage existing low-density retail to increase its density? Who are we consulting to get ideas here?

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Law Enforcement - Demographic Information (Page 18)

Edit: Goal 1, 175, Law Enforcement - Existing: (section contains demographic information)

Comment by Jeff: Is demographic information current and has this been reviewed with Police Community Advisory Board? The demographic information in this section is likely out of date. They would have valuable input on community policing priorities and needs.

Fire Services - Response Time Standards (Page 19)

Edit: Goal 2, 2.b, 177, Fire Services Protection - Existing: Maintain a fire protection response time standard of five minutes or less for fire-related incidents, and four minutes or less for medical-related incidents.

Comment by Jeff: Guessing with the edits that the new Fire Chief had comments - good to see their input. Surprised that there isn't a mention of increasing EMS service standards. Thought that was discussed in detail when the new chief came on - is that not part of the long-term plan? Also, is the demographic information in this section accurate and current?

Library - Library Board (Page 22)

Edit: Goal 4, 4.f, 181, Public Library - Existing: The Library Board is responsible for advising City Council on all matters related to the Oak Harbor Public Library.

Comment by Jeff: Does this Library Board exist? Never heard of this board. Don't see mention of it on the city's website. If it exists, should be publicized better. If it doesn't exist, should this policy be updated?

Senior Citizens - Service Barriers (Page 23)

Edit: Goal 5, 188, Senior Citizens - Existing: Continue to provide our senior residents with recreational, social, educational, and health maintenance services specifically designed to meet their current and emerging needs.

Comment by Jeff: Why does this goal have a policy combined with it? This one goal text has a policy combined with it. That seems confusing - goals and policies should be separate. Makes it hard to understand the structure and hierarchy.

Permitting - Permit Shepherding (Page 25)

Edit: Goal 7, 190, Permitting - Existing: Process land use and development permits in a fair and timely manner, with City decisions based upon clear and objective standards to ensure predictability.

Comment by Jeff: Have directly heard from a local developer that a "permit shepherding" program could be helpful. The broad idea: The city and developers are partners trying to find solutions to get development done, not just an auditor finding and reporting issues with a project. Don't know enough about permitting yet to properly define wording or suggest a full program. Goal: Bring this as a discussion topic for information. May be worth exploring how other cities implement permit assistance programs.

CLIMATE RESILIENCY

Climate and Emergency Management Integration

Comment: The new Climate Element provides an opportunity to take a more comprehensive approach to ALL environmental hazards, not just climate-related ones. Currently, climate hazards and geologic hazards are treated separately, but: - Sea-level rise + tsunami creates compounded scenarios - Critical infrastructure (water treatment facility) is vulnerable to both - Building code already requires tsunami-resistant design for critical facilities - Emergency Management Plan should coordinate with both

Should climate policies (especially CR-2.3 on infrastructure and CR-2.4 on resilience) reference multiple hazard types including earthquakes and tsunamis? How does this coordinate with Emergency Management Plan updates?

OVERALL PROCESS OBSERVATIONS

Public Engagement and Accessibility

Comment: There may be opportunities to enhance public access to comprehensive plan materials. Enhanced online materials could help residents follow the update process more easily. A dedicated Comprehensive Plan Update webpage could provide: - Current comprehensive plan and proposed amendments side-by-side - Tracked changes showing exactly what's being modified - Meeting schedules and clear timeline for the periodic update process - Information on how and when to submit public comments - Plain-language summaries of major changes

Inter-Commission Coordination

Comment: How has this comprehensive plan update engaged other city commissions? The draft includes significant Parks and Recreation policies. Coordinating with the Parks & Rec Commission could strengthen these policies with their operational expertise. Their input on maintenance standards, accessibility, and connectivity could enhance the plan.

Has the demographic information in Law Enforcement and Fire/EMS sections been reviewed by the Police Community Advisory Board? They would have valuable input on community priorities and needs.

Strategic Planning vs. Wish Lists

Comment: Many policies list specific desires without integration between related initiatives, sequencing and priority ordering, funding strategies and resources, demand analysis or needs assessment, implementation timelines, or regional coordination where needed. A better approach could be to direct the creation of strategic master plans (Parks & Rec Master Plan, Economic Development Strategic Plan) with specific methodologies, community engagement, and evidence-based prioritization. The comprehensive plan should establish the framework and standards; detailed project selection belongs in master plans and capital facilities plans.

Policy Actionability and Measurability

Comment: Many policies use subjective or non-specific language that doesn't provide clear guidance for decision-making or implementation. Terms like "adequate," "periodically," "support and encourage" don't establish measurable outcomes or accountability mechanisms.

Some ideas here: - Specify who is responsible for implementation - Define timeframes (e.g., "annual report" instead of "periodically review") - Establish measurable standards where possible - Connect policies to implementation mechanisms (master plans, ordinances, funding) - Create accountability through reporting requirements
