

## 30. Large Multifamily Housing Projects

### Proposal

Revise policy to require mix of housing in apartment projects exceeding five acres instead of current ten-acre threshold, i.e., be more restrictive; specifically, adopt proposed

- *Policy L16.12. "Require a mix of single-family and multifamily structures in villages, mixed residential density districts, and apartment projects exceeding five acres; and utilize a variety of housing types and setbacks to transition to adjacent single-family areas."*

### Background

Large apartment projects composed of similar building and housing units are efficient to construct. However such uniformity detracts from the City's goals of diverse and attractive neighborhoods. Thus, the current policy is to, "Establish development requirements which prohibit large expanses of uniform multifamily structures." In particular, the policy requires projects on sites exceeding ten acres to provide more than one housing type and density and if exceeding five acres to vary from the density and building type or style of any adjoining multifamily project. See Policy LU8.3(b). (This policy is implemented by OMC 18.04.06(N)(1).)

### Options

Option 1. The proposal: Lower ten-acre threshold to five acres for requiring variety of housing.

Option 2. No action: Relevant threshold would stay at ten acres.

### Analysis

Large apartment projects with similar structures and housing units are efficient to construct and thus generally of lower cost than projects with a variety of housing types. Large multifamily projects in Olympia generally range from 12 to 24 units per acre, thus a five-acre project may have about 100 units while a 10-acre project might have 200 units or more. See for example the Woodlands Apartments project now under construction at 800 Yauger Way SW with 224 units on 12 acres – and note that the development regulations did not require a mix for this RM-24 zoned property. The City's current 'mix of dwelling types' rule requires that no more than 70% of the units in a project be of any one type of housing, and imposes an 80% limit for 5-acre projects if adjacent to other multifamily housing. Generally the predominant type is apartment buildings with four or more units, resulting in a requirement that a small percentage be triplexes, townhouses and other forms of smaller buildings.

Large homogenous housing projects are contrary to Olympia's goals of variety and attractive neighborhoods, and have been controversial when in the vicinity of existing single-family housing. Most

of the remaining multifamily sites in Olympia are of less than ten acres. If implemented, the proposed policy could lead to a greater variety of housing types. However, this requirement would also slightly increase the cost of such housing. And, designers sometimes have found it difficult to provide smaller structures and still meet minimum density requirements without including structured parking. A stricter rule has the potential for a more compatible mix of housing types, and slightly reduced traffic and other environmental impacts as a result of slightly lower density. However, secondary impacts could result from the resulting less efficient use of land.

### **Original Staff Proposal**

Option 1. Amend policy threshold from ten to five acres to further goals of greater variety and mix of housing types.

### **Planning Commission Recommendation**

Option 1.