

## DENSITY IN HIGH-DENSITY NEIGHBORHOODS

Regarding whether to change from a requirement to a goal the minimum density of at least 25 dwelling units per acre for residential uses that are not re-using or re-developing existing structures.

### Summary of Comments

One public comment from Thurston County Chamber of Commerce supported changing this minimum density requirement to 15 dwelling units per acre, with a goal of 25 units per acre.

### Staff Analysis

High-density Neighborhood overlay zones are recommended in the Draft Plan for three areas: Downtown Olympia; Pacific Ave/Martin Way/Lilly Road triangle; and the Capital Mall vicinity. The overlay would concentrate high-density residential uses mixed with commercial uses, which would directly serve the residents and allow people to meet their daily needs without traveling outside their neighborhoods. These neighborhoods would transition from their current automobile orientation to becoming more walkable.

This issue was discussed by the Land Use and Environment Committee March 27, 2014. The Committee recommended language that is in the current Draft Plan (below), limiting the 25 dwelling unit per acre minimum density to apply only to new residential construction. This addressed concerns regarding proposed rehabilitation of existing buildings being thwarted by the minimum density requirement.

To date, very few new residential development projects have been proposed in Olympia at densities greater than 25 dwelling units per acre. There has not been a strong market for development at that density in the recent past, although a notable recent exception is the proposed Columbia Heights project on Columbia Street between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenues. The commenter's concern is that setting a minimum density at 25 dwelling units per acre may exceed the market demand and result in residential development at slightly less density (e.g., 15 units per acre, which has been more common historically) not being allowed.

### In the Public Hearing Draft

The Draft Plan would require a minimum density of 25 units per acre in this overlay zone for new development that includes residential uses:

***High Density Neighborhoods Overlay:*** *Multi-family residential, commercial and mixed use neighborhoods with densities of at least 25 dwelling units per acre for residential uses that are not re-using or redeveloping existing structures. New mixed use developments include a combination of commercial floor area ratio and residential densities that are compatible with a high-density residential neighborhood. The height in these neighborhoods will be determined by zoning and based on the "Height and View Protection Goals and Policies."*

## **Options**

**High Density Neighborhoods Overlay:** *Multi-family residential, commercial and mixed use neighborhoods with densities of at least 25 15 dwelling units per acre for residential uses ~~that are not re-using or redeveloping existing structures~~. New mixed use developments include a combination of commercial floor area ratio and residential densities that are compatible with a high-density residential neighborhood. The height in these neighborhoods will be determined by zoning and based on the “Height and View Protection Goals and Policies.”*