

Increasing Urban Residential Capacity

The Growth Management Act (GMA) was recently amended to include a list of actions cities are encouraged to take in order to increase residential building capacity. In its referral to the Planning Commission, the City Council directs that code amendments to implement certain provisions be considered. One of those provisions is allowing duplexes on corner lots.

Duplexes on Corner Lots

The GMA, in RCW 36.70A.600, encourages cities to *“Authorize a duplex on each corner lot within all zoning districts that permit single-family residences.”*

In order to allow this the following would be needed:

Modify the Permitted Uses Tables to include Duplexes on Corner Lots in the following chapters of the Unified Development Code:

- 18.04 – Residential Districts (*all zones*)
- 18.05 – Villages and Centers (*all zones*)
- 18.06 – Commercial Districts (*all zones except Urban Waterfront, Urban Waterfront-Housing, and Auto Services*)

Notes:

- a. The minimum lot size, minimum setbacks, maximum lot coverages, low impact development stormwater standards, critical areas protection measures, design review requirements, and on-site parking standards would remain unchanged.
- b. In order to obtain a building permit the applicant would need to demonstrate compliance with the development standards, regardless of whether a single family residence or duplex is proposed on the corner lot.
- c. A main difference is that a single-family residence would require at least two on-site parking spaces while a duplex would need to provide at least four on-site parking spaces (two per unit).
- d. These changes would not impact three commercial zoning districts or the City’s Industrial zoning districts because single family residences are not permitted as a primary use in those zones.

Increasing Urban Residential Capacity

The Growth Management Act (GMA) was recently amended to include a list of actions cities are encouraged to take in order to increase residential building capacity. In its referral to the Planning Commission, the City Council directs that code amendments to implement certain provisions be considered. One of those provisions is addressing accessory dwelling units (ADUs).

Accessory Dwelling Units

The GMA, in RCW 36.70A.600 encourages cities to “Authorize attached accessory dwelling units on all parcels containing single-family homes where the lot is at least three thousand two hundred square feet in size, and permit both attached and detached accessory dwelling units on all parcels containing single-family homes, provided lots are at least four thousand three hundred fifty-six square feet in size. Qualifying city ordinances or regulations may not provide for on-site parking requirements, owner occupancy requirements, or square footage limitations below one thousand square feet for the accessory dwelling unit, and must not prohibit the separate rental or sale of accessory dwelling units and the primary residence. Cities must set applicable impact fees at no more than the projected impact of the accessory dwelling unit. To allow local flexibility, other than these factors, accessory dwelling units may be subject to such regulations, conditions, procedures, and limitations as determined by the local legislative authority, and must follow all applicable state and federal laws and local ordinances.”

In order to implement this provision of the GMA in the Olympia Municipal Code, the following would be needed:

1. Amend 18.04.060(A) to make the following changes:
 - Remove owner occupancy requirement
 - Modify maximum size to 1,000 square feet
2. Amend 18.38.100 (Table 38.01) to eliminate requirement for an ADU to have an on-site parking space. (Note: Property may still provide on-site parking but it would not be required.)

Optional amendments:

3. Increase maximum building height for detached ADUs to allow for an ADU to be constructed above a detached accessory structure, such as a garage or shop building.
4. Clarify that an ADU could be attached to an accessory structure, each subject to the maximum sizes allowed in the underlying zone. This would allow an ADU of 1,000 square feet or less to be attached to an 800 square foot garage.

Increasing Urban Residential Capacity

The Growth Management Act (GMA) was recently amended to include a list of actions cities are encouraged to take in order to increase residential building capacity. In its referral to the Planning Commission, the City Council directs that code amendments to implement certain provisions be considered. One of those provisions is allowing duplexes, triplexes, or courtyard apartments on each parcel in one or more zoning districts that permit single-family residences.

Duplexes, Triplexes or Courtyard Apartments

The GMA, in RCW 36.70A.600, encourages cities to *“Authorize at least one duplex, triplex, or courtyard apartment on each parcel in one or more zoning districts that permit single-family residences unless a city documents a specific infrastructure of physical constraint that would make this requirement unfeasible for a particular parcel.”*

Note: The wording of this statutory language is important to consider. For example, it is “...duplex, triplex, or courtyard apartment...”, which indicates there is choice over which of these housing types is allowed in various zoning districts that permit single-family residences. Another key phrase to consider is, “...on each parcel...” which indicates that having different minimum lot sizes and widths for the different housing types is not allowed.

In order to implement this provision of the GMA in the Olympia Municipal Code, the following needs to be determined:

1. Which zones are appropriate for duplexes, if any?
2. Which zones are appropriate for triplexes, if any?
3. Which zones are appropriate for courtyard apartments, if any?

Since only one lot size would be allowed in each zone, a building permit for a duplex, triplex, or courtyard apartment (if allowed in the zone) would only be issued if the applicant can demonstrate compliance with the development standards of the zoning district. This includes things like building setback from property lines, maximum lot coverages (for buildings, impervious surfaces, hard surfaces), required parking spaces, maximum building heights, maximum number of stories, design review, low impact development stormwater, critical areas protection, etc. Generally, because provision of on-site parking spaces is land consumptive, residential structures with more units will occur on lots that are larger in size than the minimum lot size that is allowed in the underlying zoning district.

Building permits would not be issued if the City finds that a specific infrastructure or physical constraint would make this unfeasible for a particular parcel. This could include things like the presence of critical areas and their buffers, utility connections limitations, or other factors.

Below is a table showing which zoning districts currently allow these housing types (P = Permitted). Please note that Olympia does not have a specific definition for “Courtyard Apartments” but “Apartments” is shown in the table. An apartment is defined as three or more living units (OMC 18.02.180), so triplexes are currently only listed as a permitted use in zones that do not also allow apartments (R-4CB and R6-12).

	Low Density Neighborhoods						Medium Density Neighborhoods							
	R1/5	R-4	R-4CB	RLI	R4-8	R6-12	MR7-13	MR10-18	RM-18	RM-24	RMH	RMU	MHP	UR
Duplexes (existing)	P	P		P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Duplexes (new)	P		P	P		P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Triplexes			P			P limited areas								
Apartments				P			P	P	P	P	P	P		P

Potential Options or Considerations:

1. Allow duplexes in the R 4-8 zone.
2. Allow duplexes and triplexes in the R 4-8 zone.
3. Allow duplexes, triplexes, and courtyard apartments in the 4-8 zone.
4. Eliminate the larger lot size requirement for duplexes in the R 6-12 zone.
5. Allow triplexes in all areas zoned R 6-12. Triplexes are currently allowed only in a small area of the R 6-12 zone (see Figures 4-2c and 4-2d in OMC Chapter 18.04, Residential Districts).
6. Allow triplexes and courtyard apartments in the R 6-12 zone.
7. Consider whether or not duplexes, triplexes, or courtyard apartments should be permitted in other zones.
8. If courtyard apartments will be an allowed use, does a specific definition and set of development standards need to be created (e.g. oriented around a common open space area, amount of open space required).