



Planning Commission

Briefing: Housing Type Mix in Multi-family Housing Projects

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Briefing: Housing Type Mix in Multi-family Housing Projects

Issue: Briefing regarding proposed code amendment to implement pending Comprehensive Plan Amendment reducing threshold from ten to five acres for requiring mix of housing types in apartment projects.

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Presenter(s):

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Background and Analysis:

Olympia's Comprehensive Plan and implementing regulations require a mix of housing types in many cases. Master planned "village" projects must include a commercial component and a variety of housing. Housing developments in 'mixed residential' zones must include a mix of housing types. And as described below, many apartment projects exceeding five acres must include a variety of housing types. However, for a few apartment projects in certain zoning districts, the threshold for requiring a mix of housing is ten acres.

The draft Comprehensive Plan update as recommended by the Planning Commission and staff and now being reviewed by the City Council includes a policy that would reduce this ten-acre threshold to five acres. Specifically, proposed Land Use and Design Policy 16.12 reads: "Require a mix of single-family and multi-family structures in villages, mixed residential density districts, and apartment projects when these exceed five acres; and use a variety of housing types and setbacks to transition to adjacent single-family areas." [Emphasis added.]

The Growth Management Act and Revised Code of Washington 36.70A.040, in particular, require that Olympia adopt "development regulations that are consistent with and implement the comprehensive plan." The amendment proposed below would ensure that, if adopted, the regulation conforms with the policy change described above. Specifically, Olympia Municipal Code 18.04.060(N) is proposed to be amended as follows:

LARGE MULTIFAMILY HOUSING PROJECTS.

To ensure that large multifamily housing projects provide a transition to adjoining lower density development, multifamily projects shall be subject to the following requirements:

1. Mix of Dwelling Types.

a. In the RM-18 and RMU districts, no more than seventy (70) percent of the total housing units on sites of ~~ten (10)~~ five (5) or more acres shall be of a single dwelling type (e.g., detached single-family units, duplexes, triplexes, multi-story apartment buildings, or townhouses).

b. Multifamily housing projects in the RM-18 or RMU districts on sites of ~~five (5)~~ three (3) or more acres, which abut an existing or approved multifamily development of ~~five (5)~~ three (3) or more acres, shall contain a mix of dwelling types such that no more than eighty (80) percent of the total units in both projects (combined) are of one (1) dwelling type. The Director (or Hearing Examiner if applicable) shall grant an exception to this requirement if s/he determines that topography, permanent buffers, or other site features will sufficiently distinguish the developments.

2. Transitional Housing Types. In the RM-18, MR 7-13 and MR 10-18 districts detached single-family houses or duplexes shall be located along the perimeter (i.e., to the depth of one (1) lot) of multifamily housing projects over five (5) acres in size which are directly across the street and visible from existing detached single-family houses. Townhouses, duplexes, or detached houses shall be located along the boundary of multifamily housing sites over five (5) acres in size which adjoin, but do not directly face, existing detached single-family housing (e.g., back to back or side to side). The Director (or Hearing Examiner) may allow exceptions to these requirements where existing or proposed landscaping, screening, or buffers provide an effective transition between the uses. (See Chapters 18.170 Multi-Family Residential Design Guidelines and 18.36.140 Residential Landscape requirements.)

Note that in large part the development code already includes a five-acre threshold. The proposed amendment would change the one exception. More specific analysis would be provided at the upcoming public hearing. But, in general, this amendment would be applicable to apartment projects containing about one hundred units instead of about two hundred units. It would require developers of such projects to provide housing in a variety of structures, instead of all large apartment buildings. Potentially it would slightly reduce the housing density in these projects. Staff estimates that there are about a dozen or more undeveloped parcels that could be directly affected by this change.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

None to date. Owners of large undeveloped RMU and RM-18 zoned parcels, and neighboring residents, will probably be interested in this proposal.

Options:

This is a briefing only. The Commission's public hearing regarding this proposal is tentatively scheduled for December 2. Notice of the public hearing will be published in the Olympian and emailed to Thurston County staff and representatives of all recognized neighborhood associations at least ten days before the hearing.

The staff seeks the Commission's suggestions regarding:

1. Whether this tentative hearing date is appropriate
2. Any additional public notice or outreach, such as to potentially affected property owners
3. Additional information the Commission would want available at the hearing

Financial Impact:

Cost of processing amendment is included in base budget