

# Recent Local Government Actions to Accelerate and Incentivize Housing Production

## CITY OF MOUNT VERNON

### **More Land Zoned for More Homes**

- Density bonuses offered for affordable housing.
- Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) allows flexibility in developing a variety of housing types and densities.

### **Moderated Parking Requirements**

- Number of off-street parking spaces required reduced from four to two; one spot for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).
- Garages not a requirement for off-street parking spaces.

### **By-Right Permits for Housing**

- Eliminated the Design Review Board; design review is now entirely administrative with more opportunities for design waivers approved by the Director.

### **Faster Processing**

- Streamlined, faster processing through additions to personnel and reduced paperwork requirements.
- Continuing to update permitting software and related processes.
- Adopted additional State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) exemptions for minor new construction; up to 10 dwelling units.
- Adoption of SB 5290.

### **Cottage Clusters and Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)**

- ADU code updated to match state law (HB 1337, 2023)
  - Up to two per lot
  - Up to 1,000 square feet
  - Owner occupancy not required

### **Incentives for Affordable Homes**

- Redevelopment incentives for affordable housing-exemption from impact fees per MVMC 3.40.050.
- Duplexes allowed outright in single family zones per MVMC 17.73.130.
- Permanent supportive housing: Chapter 17.67 of the MVMC.

# CITY OF ANACORTES

## More Land Zoned for More Homes

- Housing is allowed in commercial zones.
- Reduced minimum lot sizes (2016 Comprehensive Plan/2019 Development Regulations).
- Eased density restrictions.
- Upzoning some targeted parcels.

## Moderated Parking Requirements

- Parking requirements reduced and aligned with bedroom count.
- Reduced parking for requirements for affordable housing.
- Reduced parking in transit zones.

## By-Right Permits for Housing

- Eliminated conditional use permit requirements for “middle housing.”
- All forms of housing are outright permitted in all residential zones.

## Faster Processing

- Design review is administrative.
- Updated and streamlined codes and technology.
- Adopted additional State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) exemptions for minor new construction; up to 20 dwelling units.

## Cottage Clusters and Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

- ADU code updated to match state law (HB 1337, 2023)
  - Owner occupancy not required
- ADUs exempt from impact fees

## Incentives for Affordable Homes

- 80% of impact fees for affordable housing are exempted.
- 100% of connection fees are exempted for affordable housing.

## Limit Short-Term Rentals

The effect of short-term rentals on the housing market is well-established, and it's important that new housing supply is actually made available as long-term housing. Anacortes prohibited new short-term rentals in residential zones in 2019 (pre-existing legally established rentals are allowed to continue), adopted a moratorium on short-term rentals in residential buildings in commercial zones in 2023, and made that moratorium permanent in 2024.

## Reducing Costs for Existing Homeowners

In 2023, the City Council designed and adopted a new utility bill discount program that offers a 30% discount on city utilities for low-income families and senior and disabled property owners—a discount that more than exceeds the 2023 public safety tax increase.

# CITY OF BURLINGTON

## **More Land Zoned for More Homes**

- Changed “single family” zoning to a more flexible and simplified “detached residential” zoning that allows a broader range of housing types including duplexes, townhomes, and small multi-unit buildings (less than four units).
- Reduced minimum lot size requirements in most areas and expanded eligibility for “small lot” developments. The City’s “small lot” program allows for the creation of lots as small as 3,000 square feet with corresponding restrictions on building size.
- Replaced previous “family” definition with “house-keeping unit” which covers alternative household living arrangements, including roommates, and co-housing models.
- Rezoned approximately 74 acres from detached residential to attached residential. Eliminated density restrictions in attached residential and mixed-use zones and replaced with building size, coverage, and design requirements.
- Allow multi-family throughout the city’s commercial areas provided that at least 50% of ground-floor arterial street frontage is reserved for commercial development.

## **Moderated Parking Requirements**

- Changed code to require off-street parking based on the number of bedrooms.
- Parking variance process to allow for project specific reductions.
- Public on-street parking may be used to meet minimum parking requirements and reduced parking requirements for affordable housing developments and developments within ¼ mile of a transit line.

## **By-Right Permits for Housing**

- Residential units of any type are permitted by right (without discretionary review) for any proposed project that meets current zoning code.

## **Faster Processing**

- Design review is administrative.
- Updated and streamlined codes and technology.
- Adopted additional State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) exemptions for minor new construction; up to 10 dwelling units.

## **Cottage Clusters and Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)**

- Eliminated lot size, tenure requirements, and parking requirements for ADUs.

## **Incentives for Affordable Homes**

- Zoned all publicly owned land “public facilities and services” to allow for publicly supported housing to be constructed outright.

# CITY OF SEDRO-WOOLLEY

## **More Land Zoned for More Homes**

- PENDING: New Shadow Platting regulations to allow gradual satisfaction of the minimum four dwelling units per acre.
- PENDING: Remove density maximums in residential zones then to revise naming nomenclature for residential zones to high, medium and low density (versus R-1, etc.)

## **Moderated Parking Requirements**

- PENDING: Alignment of parking requirements with bedroom count instead of unit type.

## **By-Right Permits for Housing**

- PENDING: By-right permitting for residential development when plan meets zoning code requirements.

## **Faster Processing**

- Consolidating permitting processes where feasible.
- Considering pre-approval of Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) plans.
- Launching a digital permit application system.

## **Cottage Clusters and Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)**

- PENDING: New rule allowing between three and 12 small homes (400-1200 square feet) oriented around open space area. Allows unit lot subdivision and includes incentives for construction of affordable cottage homes.
- PENDING: Allow two ADUs per residential lot, maximum size 1,000 square feet.

## **Incentives for Affordable Homes**

- Developing new partnerships with local non-profits like Family Promise of Skagit Valley and Habitat for Humanity to promote affordable housing.
- Considering reductions in impact fees and plan review fees for subdivisions that incorporate affordable housing.

# TOWN OF LA CONNER

## **More Land Zoned for More Homes**

- No difference between single and multi-family zones: all types of housing can go anywhere.
- Reduction of land required for multi-household developments (from 8,000 square feet for two units to 4,000).
- One multihousehold dwelling, townhouse, or duplex per lot permitted by Certificate of Authorization, same as single household homes.
- No density limits within Planned Unit Residential Developments (PURDs).

## **Cottage Clusters and Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)**

- Cottage clusters allowed under an administrative conditional use permit.
- Two ADUs allowed per single-household lot.

## **Incentives for Affordable Homes**

- All impact fees waived for affordable housing developed within a PURD.

# Recent Local Government Actions to Accelerate and Incentivize Housing Production

**Key**

- Not at this time
- Under consideration
- Implemented
- Pending adoption

Mount Vernon  
 Anacortes  
 Burlington  
 Sedro-Woolley  
 La Conner

## More Land Zoned for More Homes Largest >>> Smallest

Housing allowed in commercial zones	<span style="color: orange;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>
Reduce minimum lot sizes	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: orange;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>
Eased density restrictions	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: orange;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>
Density bonuses for affordable housing	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: orange;">●</span>	<span style="color: orange;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>
Shadow platting	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>	<span style="color: orange;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>
Targeted upzoning	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>

## Moderated Parking Requirements

Reduced parking minimums generally	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>
Reduced parking for affordable housing	<span style="color: orange;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>
Reduced required parking in transit zones	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>
Eliminated garage requirements	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>
Aligned required parking to bedroom count	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>

## By-Right Permits\*

Residential zones	<span style="color: orange;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: orange;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>
In commercial zones	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>

## Cottage Clusters

Allowed in zoning code	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>	<span style="color: orange;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>
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\*Many new housing developments are subject to a process known as “discretionary review” which typically requires approval by a public body often resulting in substantial delays and increased costs for new housing projects.

If a new housing development complies with all applicable laws and regulations, “by-right” permits don’t require approval by a public body, streamlining the approval process, making it faster and more predictable. This can lead to quicker construction timelines, reduced development costs, and increased housing supply.

Key  Not at this time  Under consideration  
 Implemented  Pending adoption

Mount Vernon

Anacortes

Burlington

Sedro-Woolley

La Conner

### Faster Processing

Made design review administrative	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>
SEPA exemptions for less than 10 units	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: orange;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>
Updated and streamlined codes	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>
Updated technology	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>
Adopted review time periods ordinance (5290)	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>

### Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

Maximum size (square feet)	1,000	900	1,000	800	1,000
Eliminated owner-occupancy requirement	<span style="color: orange;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>
Prohibited vacation/short-term rentals	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>
Eliminated off-street parking requirements	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>
Allow two or more per lot	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>

### Treatment of City Fees for Affordable Housing Projects

Permit fee reductions or waivers	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: orange;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>
Impact fee reductions or waivers	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: orange;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>
Connection fee reductions or waivers	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: orange;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>

### Financial Incentives for Affordable Housing

Multifamily property tax exemption	<span style="color: orange;">●</span>	<span style="color: orange;">●</span>	<span style="color: orange;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>
Affordable housing sales tax - direct investments	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>
Affordable housing sales tax - coordinated with North Star	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>
Redevelopment incentives	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>	<span style="color: orange;">●</span>	<span style="color: orange;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>
Reduced charges by city-owned utilities	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>	<span style="color: gray;">●</span>