



## **Multi-Family/Mixed Use Planning Commission Discussion**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

**I've heard the Planning Commission is considering increasing existing allowed residential density in the city, is this true?**

No, under current zoning, maximum capacity in commercial zones is up to 36 dwelling units per acre. The 36 unit per acre density was adopted by City Council in August of 2016. The Planning Commission is currently considering a maximum of 24 dwelling units per acre in commercial zoned areas and maintaining 36 dwelling units per acre in a future Downtown area. This would be a reduction in overall residential density.

**I've heard that the Planning Commission is also considering increasing allowed building heights in the city, is this true?**

No, under current zoning, maximum building height is 85-ft in the commercial areas. The 85 foot height limit was established by City Council in August of 2016. The Planning Commission is considering a maximum of 60-ft in the future Downtown area and a maximum of 45-ft in all other commercial zones. As a comparison, the height of the new Monarch Apartments on SE 264<sup>th</sup> Street are about 41-ft.

**What is happening Downtown?**

The City is working on creating code that requires future redevelopment in the area just south of the Legacy Site (Farmer's Market) between SE 260<sup>th</sup> Street and SE 264<sup>th</sup> Street to be pedestrian focused and walkable. A height limit of 60-ft and maximum dwelling of 36 units per acre is being considered in the Downtown. Please view the City's website for more information on Downtown planning: <https://www.maplevalleywa.gov/what-s-happening/current-projects/downtown-design-guidelines>.

### **Why does the City want to allow any growth?**

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires the City to plan for growth. Between 2019 and 2044, Maple Valley is projected to grow by 1,720 households and we are required to have sufficient zoning to accept development to accommodate these households. We cannot overly restrict development on parcels zoned for mixed use (commercial and residential) the same way we cannot restrict the construction of homes on parcels zoned for single family residential. Additionally, the City's desire to increase commercial development in the City requires some allowance for residential development.

### **How can we have growth in the City when schools are over-crowded?**

The Assistant Superintendent of Tahoma School District, Lori Cloud, recently spoke at a Planning Commission meeting ([Cloud Audiofile link](#)). The School District is aware of the City's current growth mandate from the GMA and has confirmed they are planning accordingly. Every year, the Tahoma School District releases a Capital Facilities Plan that addresses this issue, the current plan should be released in June 2021. Here is a link to the [2020 Tahoma School District Capital Facilities Plan](#).

### **But won't traffic increase with the proposed mixed-use development densities?**

Yes, it will. However, it will increase without the proposed mixed-use development densities as well. The increase in projected traffic is due to development projects already vested in the City and proposed development outside the City limits, such as the Ten Trails development in Black Diamond and Lakepointe in Covington. The City's Travel Demand Model shows that by allowing mix-use development in the City via the density being proposed by the Planning Commission, its impact to the Level of Service at key intersections does not significantly increase due to the planned development already vested and the planned development outside of Maple Valley city limits.

### **Can't we stop development outside the City from using our streets?**

We cannot. SR 169 and SR 516 are state owned highways.

### **Is anything proposed for the vacant parcel north of Maple Woods?**

The City does not have an active pre-application or building permit open for the parcel north of Maple Woods. However, we are aware of interest from the property owners to develop this parcel. The parcel is zoned commercial. All commercial buildings adjacent to residential zoned development are to have a 50-ft buffer with a maximum 35-ft height within the buffer. This 35-ft height is equivalent to the maximum height of a residential building. The Planning Commission is considering lowering the current

density of 36 units per acre to 24 units per acre on this property and all other commercial properties.

**Until our roads are improved and widened, there should be a moratorium on new building!! It is insane trying to drive in Maple Valley at any time of day, any day of the week.**

An emergency moratorium on development in the Downtown area is currently in place until the Downtown Standards and Guidelines discussion has been completed, a recommendation from the Planning Commission is made to the City Council, and the City Council discusses the recommendations. Additionally, until the Interim Zoning discussion has been completed by the Planning Commission and the City Council, no residential can be proposed in commercially zoned areas. The Downtown moratorium has been in place since July 2019. The suspension of residential development in commercial areas has been in place since November 2017. As long term moratoriums may be questioned by the Growth Management Hearings Board, the Planning Commission is active in the discussion on what conditions should be in place to lift the suspension of residential in Commercial areas and the development moratorium in the Downtown area.

**I do not think this city should have housing built for low income! Other surrounding cities have much lower and affordable homes if you cannot afford to live in Maple Valley.**

Goals adopted within the Housing Element of the City's Comprehensive Plan indicate a need to provide housing for all income levels. Additionally, new State laws (HB 1220) will require cities to update their Comprehensive Plans to plan for and accommodate housing for all income levels. The City of Maple Valley will be required to participate in the homelessness and housing crisis in the region.

Excerpt from [HB 1220](#)

*(4) Housing. (~~Encourage the availability of affordable~~) Plan for and accommodate housing affordable to all economic segments of the population of this state, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock.*

**What is considered affordable housing and low income?**

Affordable housing is generally defined as housing on which the occupant is paying no more than 30 percent of their gross income for housing costs, including utilities. In King County, HUD calculates the Area Median Income (AMI) for a family of four as \$115,700 (see [reference link](#)). Low income is typically defined as making 80% of the AMI if you have a family of four.

**I was unaware that Maple Valley was in such dire financial straits as to need to sell ourselves and our way of life for a few measly dollars and allow multi-family housing.**

Maple Valley has exercised sound financial planning since incorporation. However, in order to diversify the city's revenues, additional commercial development is needed for long term economic sustainability. Additionally, diversity of city revenues takes pressure off of residential tax payers for both city and school district taxes. Review of the use of multi-family and other incentives to attract commercial businesses and to support small businesses in Maple Valley is currently being discussed at Economic Development Commission and Planning Commission meetings.

**It is not a city's place in the market to determine the price of housing. If builders choose to sell or rent their homes at affordable prices that is up to them, the market will dictate what they can charge and I wish them great success and profits.**

We have a requirement by the Growth Management Act to allow a variety of housing types, including studio apartments, multi-bedroom apartments, duplexes, triplexes, condos, townhomes, and accessory dwelling units. Continuing to only allow the construction of single family residential or to stop all residential construction does not make living in Maple Valley affordable to many in the region.

**What are the consequences if we do not meet the requirements of the Growth Management Act such as allowing for growth and affordable homes in Maple Valley?**

The State has the ability to impose sanctions on cities, counties, and state agencies that do not comply with the GMA, as determined by the Growth Management Hearings Board (see RCW 36.70A.340 - .345). Sanctions may include withholding or temporarily rescinding the authority to collect portions of one or more of the following:

- Motor vehicle fuel tax;
- Transportation improvement account;
- Rural arterial trust account;
- Sales and use tax;
- Liquor profit tax;
- Liquor excise tax; and/or
- Real estate excise taxes (REET)

**Why can't we annex more area to make Maple Valley bigger and add more single family housing there?**

We cannot because there is no more area within the Urban Growth Area (UGA) to annex. The Growth Management Act has defined the UGA in order to control urban sprawl. By limiting development to the UGA, the region is preventing widespread development such as seen in other metropolitan areas (Los Angeles, San Francisco, etc.). The Cascade Mountains are protected from development due to the UGA boundaries. Rural areas in Hobart and Ravensdale are also protected from development.

**We have a homelessness problem that needs addressing more than this huge high density housing situation. The homeless are not going to move in there.**

Allowing for multi-family development is one step to help with the homelessness problem. Among other reasons, many people become homeless because they cannot afford housing. Middle and lower income families cannot afford new single family residential and need alternative residential options.

**I'm concerned about increased crime and lowered property values resulting from more multi-family residential and affordable housing.**

Maple Valley has consistently been listed as one of the top ten safest cities in Washington State ([Safe Wise Team 2021 Report](#)). We have an excellent community policing model. Additionally, studies like this one in a New Jersey suburb ([www.cbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4933022/](http://www.cbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4933022/)) show crime does not increase and property values do not decrease after affordable housing is built, in fact, the opposite is often the case. Strategies such as mixing low income housing in with moderate to high income housing, providing strict property management requirements, and requiring landscaping and building exteriors to match quality of adjacent properties are strategies that will be considered as the Planning Commission discusses affordable housing.

**I have issue with the statement that "TSD has planned for students based on the city's adopted zoning". We already have approximately 2600 students at a high school that was built with a 2400 student capacity. I'm fairly certain that each elementary school (except LWES?) has at least two portables in use. We need more classroom space BEFORE we plan for adding more students.**

The Tahoma School District actively tracks and plans for additional students. Annually, they develop a Capital Facilities Plan to accommodate the education of all students within their district. The use of portables is a management decision that most school districts use.

**It feels like the city is asking the wrong questions. It really isn't about where the increased density goes - this is a small town, it could go anywhere and impact everyone. The issue is the coordination across city services to accommodate the increase in residents and workers. The only content I've seen around that was the incomplete traffic model shared on March 17. There are no easy to find plans around how the city, as a whole, will handle growth. If you have those in place, they would be valuable in communicating the city's preparation. If you don't have them in place, please expect pushback from residents who do not feel like the city is well equipped for growth. This is not a question of where to add density. This is a question of how to cope with growth.**

This is a really important comment. The distribution of the Planning Commission flyer on multi-family housing was to solicit these questions and this type of feedback. The City's adopted [Comprehensive Plan](#) located on the City's website provides the plan for

growth. The Plan consists of the following Elements: Economic Development, Land Use, Housing, Transportation, Parks & Recreation, Environmental Quality, Capital Facilities, and Utilities. These Elements are consistent with each other, are consistent with County-wide Planning Policies, and the Growth Management Act.

**I cannot understand at all how sidewalks are not a priority, especially when they can be built FOR FREE!! Seriously, how is there not a city tax put on any and all new proposed buildings to go toward sidewalk infrastructure? How easy, you want to put a building, then you have to pay for X amount of city sidewalk based upon the dimensions of your proposed project.. I would institute this for every planned house, apt building, business immediately. Thanks..is there a sidewalk plan?**

Generally, the City can only require that developers make sidewalk improvements along their development frontage. Offsite improvements can only be required when there is a connection (nexus) linked to the development such as safe walking to schools or as a result of SEPA determination. The City does have an adopted [Non-motorized Improvement Plan](#) and approximately \$100,000 in annual budget to provide for sidewalk gap, trail, and bike lane improvements. Many of the non-motorized improvements are completed with Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) projects such as found in the [Six Year TIP](#).

**Development needs to pay for infrastructure before they can build.**

Legally, the City can only require developers to pay for a proportionate share of the infrastructure for which they have a direct impact. For traffic impacts, developers pay Traffic Impact Fees based on the number of new PM peak trips their development is projected to generate. These fees are used to fund projects in the City's Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) as adopted in the City's Comprehensive Plan. However, these projects are not fully funded by traffic impact fees as often there are existing problems not caused by a particular development. In many cases, the City must obtain grants in order to complete these projects. Through SEPA review, the City may also impose specific mitigation measures that have a nexus (i.e., linked connection) and are proportionate to the impact from the development. For example, through SEPA, when Monarch Apartments was developed, the City required a dedicated left turn signal head at the intersection of SE 264<sup>th</sup> Street and SR 169. The city also adopted [concurrency standards](#) in city's municipal codes to evaluate transportation impacts on city roadway system from a new development project, a project cannot proceed if their impacts create a concurrency failure in the City's traffic concurrency model unless they mitigate for the failure to meet concurrency standards. Concurrency applies to all intersections on arterial streets except for SR 169 which is classified as a State Highway of Significance.

**What is the City's plan for road improvements?**

Each year, the City adopts a [Six Year Transportation Improvement Plan](#) (TIP). The next Six Year TIP is anticipated to be discussed at the May 24, 2021 City Council Meeting with a public hearing scheduled for June 14, 2021 before adoption. In order to qualify for many state and federal grant funds, projects need to be placed on the City's Six Year TIP.

