



Dear Bellingham City Council,

We are writing you today to express the support from the Whatcom Housing Alliance for the Residential Multi Zoning project.

Whatcom Housing Alliance is a broad alliance of 36 organizations including; public health proponents, economic development agencies, for-profit and non-profit housing developers, smart growth enthusiasts, private business owners and others all united to build an affordable, healthy, equitable, thriving, and inclusive community. We believe more housing choices will help us be a more sustainable region by improving our environment, the social fabric and health of our people, and creating a stronger economy.

Last year, the City Council asked Staff to “leave no stone unturned” in seeking solutions to the City’s housing crisis. It was identified that many areas zoned Residential Multi (RM) have been significantly underdeveloped with densities much less than what is intended in the Comprehensive Plan. Changes to the land use code to facilitate the uses envisioned for RM zones have the potential to not only result in more homes of all shapes and sizes, but to also advance many goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan, including those related to small-scale, context sensitive housing, climate change and land use. Whatcom Housing Alliance members are so interested in the potential of this Residential Multi review that a specific Task Force was created to study, evaluate, advise and help move it along the legislative process at the City of Bellingham.

We are currently in a housing crisis and it is imperative that we take every reasonable action to help address it. By building up to the designated density in RM zones already set in the Comprehensive Plan, there is a potential to create up to 2000 new homes on vacant properties alone. This will provide many homes our community desperately needs, potentially increase permanently affordable homes, and promote development in walkable neighborhoods close to schools and services. Please take action to ensure all four areas of the RM Project are fully explored: (1) Create a simplified zoning system; (2) Allow density bonuses in areas in close proximity to transit, parks, schools and services; (3) Allow all forms of the Infill Toolkit in RM zones; (4) Mandate density minimums in RM zones.

Sincerely,

The Whatcom Housing Alliance

CC: Seth Fleetwood, Mayor and Rick Sepler, Planning & Community Development Director