

VMCC Affordable Housing Committee

Draft Minutes 10/10/2022, 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm, Zoom

[Video available here](#), passcode: 5\$YauBe&

In attendance:

Morgan Brown	Armen Yousoufian
Jason Johnson	Art Chippendale
David Vogel	Suzanne Moore
Tanya Roberts	Jake Middling
Terry Sullivan	John Osborne
Coco Carson-Rohe	

Reviewed and approved agenda that was emailed prior to meeting (pasted below with additional notes).

Discussed briefly [NPR news article on Housing Solutions being tried in Langley](#), Whidbey Island and their relevance to Vashon. Langley pioneered Cottage Housing code and is now doing so again with “Tiny House Village” code.

Agenda: [Vashon Subarea Plan Public Input Discussion](#)

The bulk of our 10.10.22 AH Committee meeting was spent identifying arguments for and against code changes currently being considered as identified by Vashon’s Subarea planner and listed below. The Committee Chair kept the discussion focused on listing arguments Committee members (currently anyone with a connection to Vashon who attends and participates) identified and deemed likely to find some level of support. Evaluating and expressing support or opposition to particular arguments will be addressed in future AH Committee meetings.

Background:

At our August meeting, Lane Zorich, King County’s Subarea Planner for Vashon gave a presentation and led a discussion on two “workplans” currently underway (as part of the 2024 County Comprehensive Plan Update) that affect Vashon and Affordable Housing:

1. [“Action 1: P-Suffix Conditions”](#).
 - a. Reviewing and updating P-Suffix special development conditions
 - b. Specifically of interest to Affordable Housing: [VS-P28, Vashon Town Plan - Town Core](#)
2. [“Action 2: Affordable Housing Incentives”](#).
 - a. “review and assess the efficacy of the affordable housing special district overlay in Vashon Rural Town”

Since work on these topics is ongoing, and the Community Council and this Committee will be expected to weigh in on the matter, let’s continue the discussion and see what comments/input we have.

Morgan – the AH Committee Chair – met with Lane after our August meeting to continue the discussion and delve deeper into the housing-related the issues. Below are some of his notes that could be useful for the Committee’s discussion on this topic. (Please use the links above to County websites for further information and opportunities for public input.)

- Planners are considering removing the “two stories” limitation from VS-P28, but keeping the 35 ft limitation.
 - Current code: “1._C. Building height shall not exceed two stories or a maximum of 35 feet as measured by K.C.C. 21A.12.050(C).”
 - Removing “two stories”, but not “35 feet” would allow three story buildings in Vashon Town Core (CB zoned properties) provided they meet 35 ft requirement
- Planners are considering
 - Scraping Affordable Housing SDO entirely since it has been ineffective (no projects have proposed using it)
 - Tweaking SDO to be more effective incentive to affordable housing
 - Planners are considering allowing a market rate component (currently, only 100% affordable housing projects qualify)

Arguments both for and against proposed code changes, as identified by the Committee. The Committee as yet, is expressing no opinion on any of these arguments.

Comments added during the 10/10/22 AH Committee meeting are highlighted in blue font.

1. VS-P28: Arguments for keeping “two stories” height limit in Vashon Town Core
 - a. Current buildings in Town Core are only two stories. Let’s keep it that scale. More than two stories would be out of context and lose the flavor of our “Rural Town”.
 - b. Three or more stories would be less people/pedestrian scale and create more shadow.
 - c. Town is big enough; we don’t want more people living there.
 - d. Parking is becoming a problem. Some Town Core buildings aren’t required to provide parking. More stories and thus more people will only exacerbate the problem.
 - e. Allowing additional stories would incentivize tearing down existing 2-story buildings and change the character of Town.
 - f. Island and Town don’t have the water resources (potable & sewer) to support the additional people.
 - g. Additional housing would concentrate low income housing and result in an undesirable impact on Town.
 - h. Additional housing would all go to wealthy people and further gentrify Town.
2. VS-P28: Arguments for dropping “two stories” height limit in Vashon Town Core
 - a. Vashon has a housing crisis. Almost all multi-family housing zoning is in Town. Planners generally advise greater efficiency (environmental, community) of directing housing towards town centers rather than sprawl.
 - b. Better availability of housing in the most island-appropriate place is more important than an “exclusionary zoning” two story limit.
 - c. This two stories limitation was an inadvertent downsizing done in the 1996 Town Core planning – when housing crisis wasn’t as acute.
 - d. Many examples exist of 3, 4 and even 5 story main street buildings that are attractive and pedestrian scale (see New Orleans French Quarter for a famous example)

- e. Even the 35 ft limit should be removed because it can be difficult to do an attractive 3 story mixed-use retail ground floor with that limit (See [City of Kirkland's Design Guidelines For Pedestrian-Oriented Business Districts](#) (p 11):

"Building frontages along pedestrian-oriented streets in the Central Business District should be configured to have a 15' story height to ensure suitability for diverse retail tenants and enhance the pedestrian experience"

- f. Prior to VS-P28's "two stories or...35 feet" limitations, current Commercial Business zoning of Town Core would potentially allow significant additional multi-family housing in Town:
 - i. CB base density is 48 du/ac
 - ii. CB base height is 60 feet
 - g. Town buildings – most of them anyway – are "super ugly" and don't need to be preserved. Build better ones.
 - h. Bigger customer base living in Town would help local businesses. It's hard enough making a business work on the Island. Town is generally empty in evening. More people living in Town would make it more vibrant and economically viable.
 - i. Having a design committee ensure that attractive, well-designed buildings go in would help Islanders get comfortable with change.
3. Affordable Housing SDO: **Arguments for keeping and/or improving SDO.**
- a. Reason for an affordable housing SDO are more compelling today than they were in 2016 because the housing crisis is worse.
 - b. Vashon Household (VHH) could use SDO's density bonus (to 18 du/ac), they just haven't had the time/opportunity to find the projects yet.
 - c. Including a market rate component would allow more diverse housing in Town and open up opportunities for VHH to partner with private developers.
 - d. Diverse, affordable housing is needed now, not later. To address problem, need to quickly adapt SDO so it works before it's too late and community is lost.
 - e. Increasing units (with SDO bonus density) brings down the cost of the units, making them more affordable.
 - f. Need to incentivize smaller, local owner-developers who don't need the same profit.
4. Affordable Housing SDO: **Arguments for scraping SDO entirely.**
- a. It's been ineffective and can't be fixed (no developer has or will use it).
 - b. We don't want more people in Town anyway.
 - c. Vashon Aquifer and/or Water District 19 doesn't have water for more housing (*debatable, but a hot topic when SDO was implemented in 2016*).
 - d. "Scrap it. We tried to use it, but County kept telling us we couldn't with our property."

1. **Next meeting Mon, 11/14/22, 7pm - 8:30pm** (2nd Mon of each month at 7pm). Guest Speaker: **Chris Bric of Shelter America Group with an update on Creekside Village**, a 40-unit Affordable Housing development planned for Gorsuch Road, just north of Town.

Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84973221899?pwd=Qit1UllQVGtYWjEyY3I5ZHBEa01HUT09>

Meeting ID: 849 7322 1899

Passcode: 751658